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ABSTRACT

A review of the published and unpublished literature on alternative perspectives for viewing organizations provides the basis for this monograph, which includes the contributions of five authors. The papers are intended to serve as a primer for educators interested in newer organizational perspectives and to stimulate them to learn more about, and examine current practices in light of, these alternatives. The first section includes two papers: one reviews common textbooks and other writings on educational administration to show how organizational theory is implemented in practice, and the other argues the utility of multiple perspectives in understanding organizational behavior. The second section offers an inventory of models, theoretical/logical structures, and interorganizational perspectives that are presently being discussed as alternatives to the bureaucratic view. Section 3 reviews the literature on the dynamic elements of organizations: communication, power, and making sense of organizational experience. The fourth section summarizes the major challenges to the dominant (bureaucratic) organizational perspective being posed by contemporary organizational theorists. (Author/WD)

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ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES FOR VIEWING EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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FOREWORD

Among other objectives, the Educational Dissemination Studies Program of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development aims to increase the quality of and access to technology pertaining to educational dissemination and school improvement processes. It is our belief that appropriate and powerful technologies in this area must deal directly with the way people think about and approach practical dissemination and school improvement activities.

Summer workshops are one of several methods employed by the Educational Dissemination Studies Program (EDSP) to develop and test new approaches. During the 1978 summer workshop, participants made several conference calls to David Clark at Indiana University regarding policy and planning implications of Clark and Guba's The Configurational Perspective: A View of Educational Knowledge Production and Utilization (Washington, D.C.: Council for Educational Development and Research, 1974). These calls provoked much discussion concerning the assumptions made by planners in dealing with organizational and interorganizational dissemination and school improvement efforts. EDSP staff asked Dr. Clark to help conduct the 1979 workshop. In subsequent planning, it was decided that several scholars should be invited as co-presenters and that a small number of educators and researchers who were highly knowledgeable concerning school improvement programs should assist as reactors. Paul Berman, School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley; Michael Scrivin, Director of the Evaluation Institute, University of San Francisco; and Karl Weick, Graduate School of Business and Public Administration, agreed to join David Clark in this venture.

The 1979 FWL Summer Workshop examined the premises and potential applications of new perspectives on organizational planning, management, and evaluation such as: loosely coupled systems, organized anarchies, configurational perspectives, contingency frameworks, garbage can decision processes, goal-free planning, goal-free evaluation, and adaptive management of change and implementation processes. In addition, participants were invited to suggest ideas for future directions for EDSP work in this area. It was consequently suggested that a "primer" on new perspectives be developed aimed at helping its readers to broaden their repertoires of analytical techniques and perspectives. That suggestion led to the development of this and a second monograph, New Perspectives on Planning in Educational Organizations.

Following the workshop, four participants--David Clark (Indiana University), Ann Huff (University of Illinois), Karl Weick (Cornell University), and Sue McKibbin (Far West Laboratory), made the commitment to develop "new perspectives" resources that could be disseminated broadly throughout the educational community. Under David Clark's leadership, the working group was expanded to include Lynn Baker (Trinity College), Mary Carroll (Phi Lambda Theta), and Linda Lotto (National Center for Research in Vocational Education). This monograph on alternative perspectives and the companion volume on new planning perspectives are the fruits of their collaborative effort.

During the summer of 1980, presentations based on drafts of the monographs were the focus of two EDSP workshops, one attended by Cooperative School Improvement Program representatives from nine Regional Educational Laboratories and Educational Research and Development Centers, and the other attended by professors and graduate students from departments of educational administration at universities in California, Nevada, and Utah. The comments and critiques of the participants at these two workshops led to further revision and refinement of the monographs.

We thank Ward Mason and Rolf Lehming, Research and Educational Practice Program at the National Institute of Education for their active interest in this effort. Although this project was partially supported by the National Institute of Education through a contract with EDSP, much time and effort in producing the monographs was contributed by the authors. Their efforts were indeed a personal commitment to make these alternative perspectives available to a wider audience. The monographs represent a significant step toward synthesizing recent organizational theory and research for educators. Because much of the literature for school administrators continues to be dominated by more traditional organizational perspectives and prescriptions, the monographs represent particularly timely and appropriate alternatives.

Paul D. Hood

Director, Educational Dissemination Studies Program
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph was stimulated by the 1979 Far West Laboratory Summer Workshop on Educational Dissemination and School Improvement. The staff of the Educational Dissemination Studies Program, Paul Hood, Sue McKibbin, and Carolyn Cates, were instrumental in designing the project and supporting it throughout the past year.

The contributing authors received consultative assistance during the project period from Karl Weick, Graduate School of Business and Public Administration, Cornell University.

PREFACE

Over the past decade, the literatures of public and business administration, sociology, and social psychology have evidenced a phenomenal growth of interest in alternative perspectives for viewing organizations. Many of the empirical studies supporting this literature were conducted in educational settings; hence we might expect the literature to improve our understanding of educational organizations. We have reviewed six journals over their past three years of publication,* identifying those articles that assert theoretical positions or report organizational research pertaining to alternatives to the traditional bureaucratic perspective. This journal review was supplemented by a survey of books and papers frequently cited by authors concerned with alternative perspectives, and by a national search for trend-setting unpublished manuscripts. We hope that we have produced a synopsis that weaves together its diverse sources in such a way that the literature is made understandable and accessible to a broad audience. We have obviously stretched ourselves beyond simple review into the realms of interpretation and application.

The following papers are intended to fulfill three overall purposes for the educational community:

- To serve as a primer for educationists interested in the newer organizational perspectives.
- To stimulate educators to learn more about these alternatives.
- To challenge trainers, policy makers, and practitioners to examine some of their current practices in the light of new perspectives.

This monograph is organized into four parts. Section I presents a point and counterpoint. Ms. McKibbin has reviewed a number of common textbooks and other writings on educational administration to demonstrate how organizational theory is handled in the field. (It is handled, in fact, almost exclusively from the vantage of traditional bureaucratic theory.) In counterpoint, Ms. Lotto has scanned the literature of organizational theory for broad viewpoints that purposefully show the utility of multiple perspectives in understanding organizational behavior.

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* The six journals included in the review were Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Harvard Business Review, and Journal of Applied Psychology.

Section II is an inventory. Mr. Clark summarizes familiar and lesser known models and theoretical/logical structures that are presently being discussed as alternatives to the bureaucratic view. Ms. Baker undertakes the same task for interorganizational perspectives.

In Section III, Ms. Carroll and Ms. Lotto review the literature on three dynamic elements of organizations: communication, power, and sense making. Whereas the inventories in Section II presented stationary models of organizations, these three variables represent the more active processes of organizing.

Finally, Section IV constitutes an effort to summarize the major challenges to the dominant organizational perspective that are being posed by many contemporary organizational theorists.

I

FROM CONVERGENCE TO DIVERGENCE:

OPENING UP NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

If you have done grad work in educational administration, or if you are familiar with the literature of the field, you will be at home with McKibbin's paper. It is a compilation of materials from textbooks on school administration; in it you will meet again the desirability of clarity in reporting patterns; of congruence between authority and responsibility; of accountability schemes that avoid ineffectiveness and inefficiency. Stay with McKibbin until the end--even if you feel familiar with the content. It is a necessary backdrop for what follows, accurately depicting as it does the predominant theoretical view that controls training and materials development in educational administration.

Ms. Lotto will then attempt to persuade you that believing is seeing--that if you modify your perspective you will actually perceive what happens differently. If this is true, it means that by holding to a single perspective, (1) we cause ourselves to see the same things over and over while missing many important phenomena; and (2) we come to interpret the world as if our limited view accounted for the results produced. After a time, we become so blinded that we swallow some incredible notions--for instance, that individuals in organizations regularly subordinate their self-interest to achieve organizational ends!

TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Sue McKibbin

> Virtually all large, complex organizations in the United States ...are best classified as bureaucracies, though the degree and forms of bureaucratization vary.
>
> [The bureaucracy in] its "ideal" form, however, is never realized for a variety of reasons. For one thing, it tries to do what must be (hopefully) forever impossible--to eliminate all unwanted extraorganizational influences upon the behavior of members. Ideally, members should act only in the organization's interests. The problem is that even if the interest of the organization is unambiguous, [people] do not exist just for organizations.
>
> The ideal form also falls short of realization when rapid changes in some of the organizational tasks are required. Bureaucracies are set up to deal with stable, routine tasks; that is the basis of organizational efficiency. (Perrow, 1972, p. 5)

Over the past century, classical organizational theorists have invented, asserted, studied, re-examined, modified, and restated a multitude of assumptions, propositions, and observations about bureaucratic systems. Their work, of course, has influenced the training of administrators in all fields, including education; and it is fair to argue that it has dominated knowledge generation and practice in educational administration.

The principles of rational administrative organization were developed by Max Weber, who coined the term "bureaucracy." Weber's set of bureaucratic characteristics formed an "ideal type," a totally rational and systematic organization based on rules, procedures, competence, contracts, and objectivity.

The tenets of the Weberian bureaucracy have long ruled both the study of educational organizations and the training of administrators. In the pages that follow, the authors of major educational administration texts speak for themselves in an anthology of quotations. These excerpts portray the assumptions about schools, deriving from traditional organizational theory, that have been accepted by educational administration as the basis for practice.

Sue McKibbin is an Associate Program Manager for the Educational Dissemination Studies Program, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, California.

Keystones of Classical Organizational Theory

Classical management writers integrated the notion of a "rational economic man" into their views of organizations. Rational economic man has access to complete knowledge and exhibits logical, predictable, goal-oriented behavior. This image was compatible with attempts to increase organizational efficiency by emphasizing structured staff interaction and controlled individual behavior. Tasks were specialized and their performance was controlled by detailed rules and instructions. Coordination and integration of people and tasks was the responsibility of superordinates in ascending levels of the formal organizational hierarchy. Some theorists assumed that failure to supervise staff closely would result in lack of cooperation and, ultimately, an inability to achieve organizational goals. The organization was seen as a mechanistic, interdependent system regulated by managers' legitimate authority and staffed by compliant workers. Efficient goal attainment was asserted to be dependent upon adequate programming and integration of organizational activities.

Listed below are six key elements presupposed by classical organizational theory:

1. A hierarchical organizational structure that systematically orders communication and authority among formally established positions.
2. Division of labor based on functional specialization.
3. A system of procedures, rules, and regulations covering the rights and duties of employees in work situations.
4. Impersonality of interpersonal relations.
5. Promotion and selection based on technical competence.
6. Rational, systematic, goal-oriented organizational processes.

Applications of Classical Organizational Theory in the Contemporary Literature of Educational Administration

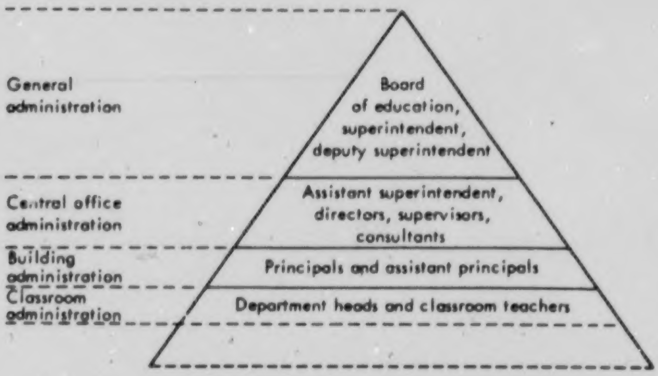
Each of the above six basic presumptions will be discussed as they have been applied to educational organizations. Applications will be illustrated by references from the current literature of educational administration.

Hierarchy of Authority

> The effectiveness of the organization is enhanced [when there is] a single head [and] when superordinates delegate authority to subordinates. (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1974, pp. 97-98)

Organization charts. The classical organizational chart depicts vertical interconnections of formal authority. Relationships among peers, superiors, and subordinates are commonly portrayed on such a chart by the arrangement of boxes in hierarchical levels. Two main purposes are served by such designs. First, they visually structure superordinate-subordinate relationships within the organization. Second, they specify the hierarchy of intra-organizational relationships designed to achieve the functional goals of the system.

Organizational charts assign status, regulate formal activity, provide a structure for performance evaluation, and legitimate the authority of one person over another. Models for structuring organizational charts are found frequently in the literature and generally assume a pyramidal form (Knezevich, 1969, p. 41):


General administration
Board of education, superintendent, deputy superintendent
Central office administration
Assistant superintendent, directors, supervisors, consultants
Building administration
Principals and assistant principals
Classroom administration
Department heads and classroom teachers

Authority, responsibility, and accountability. In the classical view, authority has two sides. The superior has the right to command the subordinate; and the subordinate is expected to be attentive to these directives. Formal position and its associated control over rewards and sanctions provide the superior with the means to elicit the compliance of subordinates. Such prerogatives are a function of the rational-legal authority of the position rather than of the power of the person in it. Authority provides the means for centralizing direction and control to meet organizational objectives.

Authority and responsibility are linked directly: the responsibility to complete a task should be accompanied by the authority to do so. Individuals are accountable for their actions when they are given both authority and responsibility. This proposition is the basis for much of the classical management literature. It legitimizes the existence of the organizational hierarchy and structured control systems. The necessity of congruence between authority and responsibility is a premise frequently encountered in the life of the educational administrator.

> Authority is not given to a person as a personal property but rather as a necessary adjunct to the accomplishment of the tasks assigned. Once the delegation has been made, the limits of autonomy established, and the nature of the authority attending the delegation determined, there is no doubt that the person to whom the grant was made will achieve an added authority beyond that granted. (Eye and Netzer, 1969, p. 110)

> Authority is the right to command (leadership). If someone has the responsibility for an activity, that person should have the authority. Authority is evidenced by control over resources, rewards, and functions, and authorization to make decisions regarding them. (Davis, 1974, p. 119)

> School personnel must be held accountable to immediate supervisors for performance of mutually agreed-upon goals and objectives according to their delegated authority and responsibility. (Lewis, 1974, p. 32)

Task Specialization and Division of Labor

> The effectiveness of an organization is enhanced by the division of labor and task specialization, when every person in the organization knows to whom and for what he is responsible. (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1974, pp. 98-99)

Classical theory suggests that the work associated with each organizational function be divided into specialized tasks which then can be organized into distinct subunits or departments. Activities necessary for the accomplishment of overall objectives must first be determined. Interdependent tasks should be distributed to appropriate specialists, assigned to departments, and coordinated by formally appointed superiors. Technical and economic advantages are said to derive from such a rational, logical approach, even though structural interdependencies require considerable monitoring and control.

As the following quotations illustrate, the advantages that follow from specialization and differentiation have been well recognized in the literature of educational organization:

> The Trump plan is generally regarded as the first model for horizontal differentiation of staffs. Horizontal differentiation assumes that teachers perform different kinds of tasks and that these tasks are equal in importance and responsibility. The second model--vertical or hierarchical differentiation--is usually attributed to Dwight Allen. This model assumes that teachers perform different tasks and that these are not equal in importance and responsibility. These plans also acknowledge that teachers have different talents and interests. (Templeton, 1974, pp. 2-3)
>
> There should be specialization in assignment of tasks but with some tasks to be done in common. Differentiation and specialization of assignment is a basic characteristic of organization. (Miller, Madden, and Kincheloe, 1972, p. 389)

Written Rules and Regulations

> The effectiveness of an organization is enhanced by the development of standardized procedures for routine administrative operation. (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1974, p. 99)

Rational organizations provide explicit guidelines to order the behavior of individuals. This they accomplish through a formally established organizational structure accompanied by written rules, regulations, and operating procedures. These components exist so that activity can be standardized and routinized as much as possible, thus increasing efficiency. The assumption is made that staff will follow the prescriptions presented in organization manuals and communications from their superiors.

A substantial volume of material has been produced on the use of rules and regulations in schools. The extent to which these are considered requisite to the successful operation of educational organizations can be gathered from the citations below:

> Rules represent the extension of central authority into the routine work situation. Much of the administrator's daily routine consists of applying rules to particular cases. This persistent reference to rules routinizes even the most dramatic work problems which confront the organization by classifying them and prescribing standard solutions. (Lane, Corwin, and Monahan, 1967, p. 184)
>
> School districts and boards that operate within the framework of a written policy handbook are less apt to be accused of abuses of power....A policy handbook, adopted by the board on the basis of recommendations put forth by the superintendent, outlines administrative procedures and relationships in

> addition to codifying and systematizing previously adopted board policy. It enables each employee to know his functions, thus fixing responsibility. (Stoops, Rafferty, and Johnson, 1975, p. 93)

> Rules stabilize and hold together the elaborate, complex systems of authority, status, and technical skills which constitute modern bureaucratic organizations. Rules reduce uncertainty by eliminating, as far as possible, the influence of individuals and creating a fairly permanent and predictable structure of relationships independent of the occupant of a given position. (Anderson, 1968, p. 105)

Impersonality

> The principle of impersonality promotes discipline by separating office from person, thus minimizing the significance of the total personality while illuminating the job requirements. (Lane, Corwin, and Monahan, 1967, p. 185)

Strict constructionists of traditional organizational theory emphasize the nomothetic dimension of the organization (the attainment of organizational goals) in contrast with the idiographic dimension (attainment of individual goals). Ideally, organizations are for them impersonal structures within which employees do what they are told; "fit" their described positions; and are rewarded for their responsiveness. Deviations from this pattern are to be eschewed; unavoidable deviations are tagged "informal organizations" to signal their illegitimacy.

Various control mechanisms are used in an attempt to increase congruence between organizational goals and individual interests. Individual and organizational plans specifying performance objectives provide the basis for such control; discrepancies between expected and actual employee performance can thereby be identified and corrected.

Numerous prescriptions have been presented to help school administrators enforce organizational goals and employee accountability, e.g.:

> Control...requires the use of various methods and techniques to impel educators to perform in accordance with their objectives. Factors which can enhance control are:
>
> 1. Maintaining an organized structure and keeping it as simple as possible to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.
>
> 2. Maintaining adequate supervision to seal gaps in the school system which reflect performance delay.

> 3. Maintaining accurate information in order to make decisions and assess performance. (Lewis, 1974, p. 33)

> Within the formalistic organizational construct, the behavior of subordinate employees is perceived to be generally neutral ...and passive....The best operational or control leader is that person who can manipulate the rewards and sanctions in order to secure the greatest benefits to the organization for the least cost. (Granger, 1971, pp. 215-216)

> Factual, objective standards of judgment and of performance are used by superiors. Impersonal, rational standards are used in recruiting, promoting, disciplining, and controlling members of the organization. (Anderson, 1968, p. 4)

Objectivity in Personnel Policies

> The effectiveness of an organization is enhanced by personnel policies which include selecting the competent, training the inexperienced, eliminating the incompetent, and providing incentives for all members of the organization. (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1974, p. 101)

According to classical theory, personnel policies are objective and formalized. Employment is based on technical competence. Favoritism in hiring and promotion is avoided when objective staff selection and performance evaluation practices are followed. Selective retention of employees and job security are determined by formalized personnel procedures. Contracts specify a level of compensation satisfactory to both the individual and the organization. Motivation is provided by financial incentives, which are closely linked to performance. However, in many schools this latter does not apply, since salaries are determined solely by formal education and teaching experience, rather than by quality of performance.

Here are some citations from the literature concerning objective personnel policies and practices:

> The rate of pay, the amount and number of increases, the conditions under which they are earned, the classifications within a salary schedule, and the ultimate salary paid determine to a significant degree the number and kind of teachers who will be attracted to and retained by a school district. (Miller, Madden, and Kincheloe, 1972, p. 188)

> The contract establishes the joint responsibility of supervisor and supervisee for defining and achieving the results desired. By working together according to clearly specified rules, supervisors and subordinates can achieve open and thorough communication. Also, the contract eliminates the need for "face-to-face" evaluations of subordinates by supervisors, replacing them with evaluations conducted "side-by-side." The emphasis is shifted from managing the man to managing the job. (Dunn, 1975, p. 4)

Rational and Systematic Processes

> Administrative efficiency is valid only to the extent that it contributes to the attainment of the goals of the organization, the goals of the actors in the organization, and the extent that it meets the requirements of the environment for the survival of the organization. (Morphet, Johns, and Reller, 1974, p. 96)

Assumptions about the rationality of individuals, problem solving, and goal attainment are implicit in traditional theory. Given requisite information about problems, possible solutions, and consequences, it is expected that organizational members will follow the course of action most beneficial to the organization. Behavior is viewed as essentially goal-oriented, rational, and systematic.

The cornerstone of organizational rationality is the planning process. A generic planning model prescribes six steps:

1. Establish general organizational goals and more specific program objectives.
2. Collect information about alternative actions and evaluate their consequences.
3. Select the best course of action.
4. Implement the activity.
5. Evaluate the consequences of the action.
6. Modify organizational goals, objectives, and plans accordingly.

Educational administrators are trained to strive to create rational, goal-attaining organizations, as the following quotations indicate:

> Because the public school system gets support from mandated taxes, its operation must be goal-seeking as well as mission-serving. (Miller, Malden, and Kincheloe, 1972, p. 395)

> The four phases of rational decision making are:
>
> 1. Diagnosing or identifying and clarifying the problem. Defining the specific parts of the problem; defining the situation in which the problem exists.
>
> 2. Discovering alternative solutions. There are a minimum of three alternative solutions to every problem.
>
> 3. Analyzing and comparing alternatives. Understand what you are trying to change, keep in mind the organization's goals as well as your personal goals.
>
> 4. Selecting the proper alternative or plan to follow. Now that you have completed diagnosing the problem, discovering alternatives, and analyzing the alternatives, you are ready to complete the final step in decision making. Your decision may be tested and challenged, but if you have completed your homework properly, your decision will stand the test of time. (Bullis, 1977, p. 138)

> The evidence is clear and persuasive that to succeed in life one must have clearly defined goals that he pursues with determination. The same is true of organizations. Mutually established objectives that are problem-oriented and stated with precision give direction and purpose to an organization. If they are (1) clearly defined, preferably quantified and measurable, (2) realistic in that they are attainable, and (3) understood in that they are specific and known to all members of the organization, they serve effectively as guidelines to action and evaluation. (Read, 1974, p. 10)

Reflections on Classical Organizational Theory

This section has considered the "ideal type" bureaucratic organization as it has been conceptualized by organizational theorists and assimilated and interpreted for administrators in educational organizations. Now, no theorist will argue that the formal elements of the traditional model explain all that occurs within organizations; the concept of the "informal organization" has been invented to cover the modifications in formal structure brought about by the day-to-day give-and-take of organizational life. But many theorists and trainers of administrators do argue that:

1. The classical model accurately portrays much of what occurs in bureaucratic systems, and that deviations from it adversely affect the output of organizations.

2. The classical bureaucratic model has worked well enough to have resulted in some useful rules of thumb for administrators, e.g.,

    a. An employee should report to only one supervisor.

    b. Authority should be commensurate with responsibility.

    c. Employees should be assigned to areas of specialization.

    d. Rules and regulations avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

    e. Specifying objectives improves performance.

    f. Rewards should be based upon performance.

    g. Organizations exist to attain specified goals.

3. Deviations from such traditional "principles" are observable in organizations, but should be avoided whenever possible. The ideal organization is one in which formal and informal organizations are congruent.

4. A bureaucratic view of organizations may have its limitations, but feasible alternatives are not currently available. Most of the breakdowns noted in bureaucratic organizations could be avoided if only our technology matched our conceptual sophistication.

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BELIEVING IS SEEING

Linda S. Lotto

> Leopards break into the temple and drink the sacrificial chalices dry. This occurs repeatedly, again and again. Finally it can be reckoned on beforehand and becomes part of the ceremony.
>
> Franz Kafka, "Great Wall of China"

Seeing is believing. If it looks like the rabbit came out of the hat, most people will believe that it did. Likewise with most organizational theories and analyses: if we constantly encounter organizational participants and formal documents that assert the primacy of organizational goals, then we infer that organizations are goal-attaining entities. But Karl Weick (1979) suggests that the inverse adage, "Believing is seeing," more aptly describes the way things are; that people see what they already believe exists:

> Beliefs are cause maps that people impose on the world after which they "see" what they have already imposed. (p. 135)

The view of organizations predominant in educational administration today--the image of the organization as a rational, bureaucratic, and goal-attaining entity--reflects a belief system rooted deep in American culture, in the traditions of positivist science, the norms of rationalism and order, and the procedures of comparative, quantitative analysis. What would we see if we believed differently? What would appear if we viewed organizations through different lenses (e.g., Marxist, phenomenological, metaphorical)?

Organizations are complex, diverse, intricate entities that give rise to subtle and often confusing phenomena. Individual responsibility frequently exceeds authority. Decision making does not always wait for formal decision situations. Rules are interpreted situationally and sometimes subordinates appear to be controlling superordinates. Because of these intricacies, both observers and participants tend to simplify and generalize experiences with organizations in order to make sense of them.

But simplification isn't the only way that people can respond to complexity. Conant and Ashby's (1970) concept of requisite variety suggests that diverse experiences can be comprehended only by using diverse conceptual frameworks to record and structure a range of input. Put more simply, only variety can understand variety.

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If our belief systems are uniform and invariant, then our ability to observe variability will be suppressed. We will attend only to a small portion of the stimuli in our organizational environment. The result, as Weick (1979) describes it, will be that "most of the input will remain untouched and will remain a puzzle to people concerned with what is up and why they are unable to manage it" (p. 189). The concerned inquirer, analyst, observer, or manager must somehow develop a repertoire of perspectives from which to view organizations. The information produced by these multiple vantages will have the benefit of being simultaneously diverse and ordered (and therefore manageable). Weick suggests that

> Diversity in the phenomenon [should] be matched by diversity in the inquirer so that more of the phenomenon can be comprehended and made sensible. Diversity is enhanced by the adoption of ambivalent conceptual orientations, ambivalent inquiring practices, and varying positions on the issues of generality, accuracy, and simplicity. (p. 63)

This paper will explore some alternative outlooks for viewing organizations. The perspectives intentionally run counter to those of traditional science, rationalism, and the procedures of quantitative inquiry. The object of this exploration will be to cultivate diversity and flexibility in the belief structures used to comprehend and work with organizations.

One way to generate alternatives is to retreat from the conventional view to the component lenses that created it. In this case, the lenses used to generate our present understanding of organizations and organizing behavior seem to consist of three types:

1. Cultural context of inquiry. The ideological influence of a culture underpins all mental activity. The structures of consciousness are geographically bounded, highly consensual, and nearly invisible. How is organizing seen in non-American, non-capitalistic societies?

2. Images of organizing. Everyone forms comfortable, comprehensible mental pictures of intangibles like organizations. How can we develop more insightful and imaginative, albeit less comfortable, images and metaphors?

3. Images of inquiry and inquirers. The paradigms of inquiry itself are value-laden. They prejudice the way we view science and scientists. By entertaining alternative ways of conducting science and alternative roles for the scientist, can our investigations produce new understandings, new perspectives, and most importantly new problems for the inquiry process?

The remainder of this paper will examine these lenses as sources of the perspectives or belief systems we use to view organizations. Each lens will be described and the ways it has contributed to the predominant view of organization will be noted. An alternative lens will then be posited and briefly inspected.

The Cultural Context of Inquiry

The Germans call it the Weltanschauung; sociologists call it structures of consciousness; laymen call it a world view. These terms all refer to the underlying ideologies that both reflect and shape our experiences. These ideologies are social, cultural, political, and linguistic in nature and are expressed broadly by the observable national, ethnic, and linguistic differences among us. Such differences not only reflect experience retrospectively, they shape experience prospectively. The many Eskimo words for snow reflect the varied experiences Eskimo people have with snow. But that vocabulary also works to shape future experiences with snow by making the Eskimo alert to differences in texture, color, and conditions that might be ignored if all white stuff from the sky were just "snow."

The ideological forces of our world views affect the way we think about things in our world--including organizations.

> Organizational theory, like other theories in the social sciences, has been dominated by powerful ideological forces which, taken together, have more or less successfully reproduced and legitimized the structure of capitalist society. Organizational theory is thus a historical product, reflecting and reconstructing--like all products of mental labor--more or less adequately its own practical environment. (Heydebrand, 1977, p. 85)

Conventional organizational theory reflects the ideological forces of Western society--pragmatic, nonpartisan, rational, scientific, hierarchical, and competitive. Weber's ideal conception of a rational bureaucracy particularly suited the American national ethos; the scientific management movement sought to operationalize, in a characteristically American fashion, Weber's model.

What might we see if we look at organizing from another cultural/social ideology? The altered context should provide a new value structure with which to interpret and judge organizational activities. New variables would be emphasized and new relationships posited among variables. One way to "try out" the utility of a new cultural perspective is to choose an example that will magnify cross-cultural differences. Since the ideology of the Far East is in many respects dramatically opposed to that of the West, it will here be used to simulate the kind of effect one might experience in viewing organizing from a different cultural perspective.

Vision #1: A Zen Perspective on Organization

The Zen perspective is an Eastern perspective, one that is in many ways alien to the Western mind. Three characteristics typify this ideology:

1. Acceptance. The culture of the East emphasizes acceptance of life; it prescribes that we take a participant-observer role, watching events unfold. This contrasts sharply with Westerners' nearly obsessive need to control and shape their world.

2. Belief in the duality of nature. The ancient Chinese spoke of *yin* and *yang*, the dark and light forces that underlie and, in opposition, constitute the universe. This belief system leads the Eastern mind to look for and take pleasure in conundrums and paradoxes. The Western mind, on the other hand, is uncomfortable with equivocality and ambiguity.

3. Reverence for life. It is life and not just humankind that is sacred in the East. All things operate together in the harmony of the universe, and each contributes equally. In the West, the person is central, and civilization seeks to dominate nature.

When applied to organizations and organizing, this ideology emphasizes first of all the humanness of such enterprises. The organization is not an "organization" but a company of unique and valuable individuals. In Japan, employees are employed for life; the organization becomes a kind of extended family; management strategies emphasize human interaction and respect. Organizational participants are valued for their unique and idiosyncratic contributions to organizational activities and the quality of organizational life (Pascale, 1979).

But since the human is not the center, not the prime mover in this cultural context, other kinds of variables are also important--in particular, the duality of known and unknown, the clear and the ambiguous. The Eastern mind considers man to be in harmony with the universe. Realization of that harmony demands attention to both what is known and what is not known.

As the Tao describes it:

> Thirty spokes are made one by holes in a hub
> Together with the vacancies between them, they
>   comprise a wheel
> ...
> Thus we are helped by what is not
> To use what is. (Bynner, 1944)

From the Zen perspective, one must view organizing in terms of relationships, honor, and obligation beyond the economic transactions of the marketplace. A company negotiates its actions carefully and patiently with attention to things known and unknown. Time is a neutral variable; patience a virtue. Cooperation and participation are real concepts, not empty admonitions. The formal organizational structure is understood to be primarily formal, for external adornment and appreciation, and not necessarily integral to the workings of the organization.

Images of Organizing

The dominant contemporary image of organizing and organizations in the United States is clearly derived from Weber's rational concept of the bureaucracy. That image presumes that the critical properties of an organization are structural--including such variables as size, complexity, specialization, formalization, and centralization. The image has become so powerful that, as Ouchi (1979) notes:

> We are incapable of thinking of organizations except as bureaucracies. Virtually every organizational theorist bases his work, either explicitly or implicitly, on the Weberian model. (p. 8)

The Weberian image determines our expectations of life in organizations; our strategies for working with organizations; and our attempts to investigate and extend our understanding of organizations. The term "bureaucracy" is even used synonymously with the word "organization." However, researchers and theorists are now observing that not all organizations are appropriately portrayed as bureaucracies; some would argue, for example, that a more valuable image of educational organizations is conveyed by the term "organized anarchy" (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972). Organized anarchies are typified by (1) ambiguous preferences, (2) unclear technologies, and (3) fluid participation. Sproull, Weiner, and Wolf (1978) describe organized anarchies this way:

> The theory of organized anarchies, which visualizes organizations as a series of loose connections among a large number of changing elements, suggests that decisions can be only partially explained as outcomes determined by rational intentions....The theory of decision making and learning in an organized anarchy emphasizes the limited capacity of human beings to rationally resolve intricate and vague problems; the heavy influence of context upon organizational processes; the power of simple rules or symbolic acts for action and the evaluation of action; and the ascendancy of social mechanisms and individual preconceptions over deductive standards in the process of organizational learning. (pp. 5-6)

The use of a single image to describe so complex a phenomenon as an organization is both parochial and extremely limiting. Invariably, any one image will constitute a poor match with real life in such an institution. Hence we must consider the development and employment of multiple images to enhance our understanding. These can take one of two forms: metaphors, and more formally, conceptualizations or logical frameworks.

Metaphors enrich our understanding of organizations through comparison and through the transfer of characteristics from familiar contexts to unfamiliar ones. They enable us to view abstract or complex phenomena from new points of view; they communicate immediately, vividly, and wholistically. Weick (1979) comments:

> Metaphors are abundant in organizational theory; organizations have variously been portrayed as anarchies, seesaws, space stations, garbage cans, savage tribes, octopoid, market places, and data processing schedules. Diverse as they are, each metaphor has articulated some property of organizations that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. (p. 47)

Conceptualizations, logical or theoretical frameworks, models--these are all labels for the abbreviated pictures of complex and abstract phenomena that we carry around in our heads. They operate by simultaneously simplifying and ordering the phenomena in terms of key variables and interrelationships. As opposed to metaphors, conceptualizations are rational, specific, and cognitive. Kaplan (1964) notes that conceptualizations are reconstructed images of reality, freed from the complexity and irrationality of the day-to-day logic-in-use. And they are in addition hypotheses about the phenomena being observed:

> Reconstructed logic is itself, in effect, a hypothesis. As with other hypotheses, as time goes on it may become more and more awkward to "fit" the hypothesis to the facts--here, the facts constituted by the logic-in-use. It is not a question of whether the facts can be so construed, but whether it is still worthwhile to do so, whether the reconstruction in question continues to throw light on the sound operations actually being used. (p. 10)

Vision #2: The Marketplace Model of Organizing

Suppose we were to imagine organizations not as bureaucracies or anarchies, but as marketplaces. What would we see? What would we look for?

Our attention would be focused first of all not on the organization as a cumulative or singular entity, but on the individuals who participate in it. We would agree with Barnard (1938) that "the individual is always the basic strategic factor in organization" (p. 139). In observing the behavior of individuals, we would look for that basic marketplace activity: two-way mutually beneficial exchange. The employee contributing his or her labor in return for money is an obvious example of a market transaction. The employee who befriends a secretary in return for access to the boss is also engaging in a transaction. Exchanges can be between individual-organization or individual-individual; they can be direct, as in the first example, or indirect, as in the second.

To be satisfactory, an exchange must be perceived as equitable by both parties; that is, both must feel they have derived benefits of equal value. The open market theoretically assures equity through competition; but in bureaucracies, equity is often problematic. So this alternative image leads us to view organizational effectiveness less as a function of goal attainment than as a function of participant satisfaction. The marketplace model of organizing displaces the centrality of organizational goals (and the necessity of consensus on goals) in favor of individual transactions. Key variables highlighted by this conceptualization include: (1) the nature of exchanges and the incentives offered; (2) the effectiveness of the exchange--did both sides feel equitably rewarded for their contributions; and (3) the transaction costs, i.e., the costs incurred by each side to assure equity (Ouchi, 1979).

Images of Inquirers and Inquiry

The very way in which researchers view their research and themselves as inquirers constrains what they see and how they interpret what they see.

Scientists and Science

Being a researcher means buying into a set of values and beliefs concerning:

1. The nature of scientific knowledge,
2. Ways of knowing the world, and
3. The role of the scientist in inquiry.

These beliefs, in turn, lead the inquirer to adopt certain styles and procedures. Particular beliefs are the products of the unique mix of experience, socialization, preferences, and abilities that each individual brings to his/her task. Mitroff and Kilmann (1978) suggest that there are four basic scientific "types": the Analytical Scientist, the Conceptual Theorist, the Conceptual Humanist, and the Particular Humanist. Table 1 summarizes the distinguishing characteristics of these types.

Table 1

Typology of Scientists by Beliefs and Attitudes
(based on Mitroff and Kilmann, 1978)

Type of Scientist	Characteristic Beliefs and Attitudes		
	Nature of Scientific Knowledge	Ways of Knowing	Role of the Inquirer in Inquiry
The Analytical Scientist	Value-free Certain	Experimental method Logical positivism	Disinterested observer Recorder
The Conceptual Theorist	Value-free Ambiguous Diverse	Dialectics Logical positivism	Imaginative Integrative
The Conceptual Humanist	Personal Political	Interactive Phenomenological	Speculative Participant observer
The Particular Humanist	Symbolic Intense	Experiential Phenomenological	Participant

The Analytical Scientist is the layperson's stereotypic scientist, asserting the certainty of science, employing the rational-deductive mode of inquiry, and recording data objectively. The other types become increasingly less familiar until we reach the Particular Humanist, a sort of scientific poet who learns from a passionate involvement with life. Mitroff and Kilmann are about the business of opening up the concept of scientist--because what scientists thinks they are and perceive their role to be will assuredly color what they does and how they interpret experiences.

Contemporary organizational research and theory rely predominantly on a single view of the inquirer, the Analytical Scientist, and a single type of inquiry, logical positivism. Recent challengers feel that the recruitment of these representations (and all their attending methods and assumptions) right out of the natural sciences has been counterproductive to the field of organizational science.

> What appears at first to be a crisis of relevancy or usefulness of organizational science is, we feel, really a crisis of epistemology. The crisis has arisen, in our judgment, because organizational researchers have taken the positivist model of science which has had great heuristic value for the physical and biological sciences and some fields of social sciences, and have adopted it as the ultimate model of what is best for organizational science. By limiting its methods to what it claims is value-free, logical and empirical, the positivistic model of science when applied to organizations produces a knowledge that may only inadvertently serve and sometimes undermines the values of organization members. (Susman and Evered, 1978, pp. 582-3)

The use of this traditional mode of inquiry has led researchers to accept as axiomatic reality such organizational features as structure, hierarchy, technology; to assume self-report data from subsets of organizational participants as accurate representations of organizational reality; and to ignore the role of the inquirer in the creation of organizational reality (Benson, 1977). Would other images of inquiry lead to more useful insights about organizing? What would be the effect of alternative modes of inquiry on our view of organizations?

Methods of Inquiry

Social science research is an inferential process of observation yielding successive incomplete views of the phenomenon under investigation. The procedural decisions made by the inquirer will affect the outcome as much as will the original conceptualization of the problem--not merely in terms of methodological rigor, but in terms of the kind of picture the study will yield. A laboratory experiment will reveal distinctly different aspects of a situation than will a case study or a survey. Procedural decisions--decisions about study design, analysis, and data --are tradeoff points, bartering depth for breadth, power for scope, etc.

The present view of organizations is derived from a fairly well-defined tradition of quantitative comparisons. Closely associated with this tradition are pre-made decisions as to the appropriate (1) unit of analysis; (2) data sources; and (3) data aggregation techniques. The net effect of these procedural decisions is the creation of a specific lens that illuminates organizational phenomena in certain reliable and predictable ways.

Unit of analysis. Quantitative analysts have tended to employ the formal organization qua organization as the primary unit of analysis. Benson (1977) has challenged the utility of that decision from the standpoint of current findings from (1) micro-process analysis and (2) macro-structure studies. From the former perspective, the organization is viewed as a social reality derived from human interactions. From the latter, organizations are network components in a multi-organizational society in which "the features of specific organizations are determined to some degree by tendencies of the network" (Benson, 1977, p. 12). These findings that individual interactions and larger social forces shape organizations call into question the wisdom of fixing on the formal organization as the principal unit of analysis.

The unit (or level) of analysis chosen by the inquirer is the frame used to order and understand the data. A narrow, highly focused frame enlarges detail; a broad, diffuse frame highlights patterns and relationships not visible with a smaller frame. By concentrating on the order revealed by a single frame of reference, organizational researchers have systematically excluded frames now shown to be useful in comprehending organizations.

Data sources. Our picture of an organization will vary with the source of data used to study it. Secondary source data yield a different image of the organization than primary data. Looking at what people do is quite different from asking them what they do or what they think others do. The picture surely varies depending upon the hierarchical level tapped within the organization: a parent's perception of a school seldom matches that of an individual teacher, or the principal, or a custodian.

Comparative organizational analysts have tended to rely heavily on self-report data from management levels and/or secondary source materials emanating from management (e.g., mission statements, operations manuals, policy handbooks). Researchers of educational organizations, reflecting this bias, have over-emphasized normative survey methodology in gathering organizational information. An over-representation of any data source or methodology tends to affirm as sufficient an insufficient, though necessary, view of organizational reality.

Data collection and aggregation techniques. Organizational scientists working within the tradition of logical positivism have stressed quantitative techniques of data collection and aggregation. This quantitative predilection has encouraged researchers to trade off accuracy for simplicity and generality because of the need (1) to focus on associational relationships among a relatively small set of variables and

(2) to attend to those variables on which data could be reliably collected across organizational sites (staff size, expenditures, enrollments, years of experience, and the like). Specificity and richness of detail are thus sacrificed for generality and reliability.

Vision #3: An Ethnomethodologist Looks at Organizations

Enthnomethodology is the study of *the methods of people* and should not be confused with the techniques of ethnography. Ethnomethodologists are not Analytical Scientists in the traditional sense. They employ a mode of inquiry that they consider more appropriate to the social process fields than those adapted from the natural sciences. Ethnomethodologists have been characterized by Tuckman (1978) as holding the following values and attitudes:

1. *Beliefs about the nature of scientific knowledge*. Ethnomethodologists view knowledge as situationally determined and meaningful only as personally interpreted.

2. *Beliefs about epistemology*. Since ethnomethodologists believe that there is no underlying or inherent order or objective reality in the everyday world, they also believe that we can only come to know things experientially, that is, by interacting with the reality we seek to know.

3. *Beliefs about the inquirer's role in inquiry*. Ethnomethodologists view the inquirer as a biased participant in inquiry, an active contributor to the reality under investigation.

Two things happen when this image of inquiry is applied to organizations: (1) the inquirer addresses a whole new set of problems; and (2) alternative modes of inquiry, logic, and analysis come to the fore. New problems and new topics arise because what was previously assumed to be objective reality is now problematic. The rationality once believed to be the underlying basis of organizational life is "unmasked" as a social construct, used retrospectively to interpret and legitimize history and prospectively to shape and define reality. Organizational features are now viewed as the products of social interaction. The focus of organizational research and theory shifts to the way these features, as well as the informal norms and procedures of organizational life, are generated and maintained.

Because the enthnomethodologist believes in a consensual basis for knowledge, statistical analysis and comparative studies are less appropriate to the interpretive tasks of inquiry. Instead, in-depth case studies and personal reporting are the preferred modes of inquiry and analysis. The meaning of any given data set is ultimately determined through the interaction of the inquirer and the subject.

> Portrayals of human life are bound to the reflexive capacity of human beings to imaginatively reconstruct, and develop an emotional relation toward, experiences that are not their own; and thereby to further their understandings of themselves. (Giddens, 1976, p. 148)

The study of organization shifts from the examination of objective natural phenomena to the inspection of human process, concentrating not on predicting and ordering, but on describing and understanding.

This approach to inquiry will lead the researcher to make different decisions about (1) appropriate units of analysis, (2) data sources, and (3) data collection and aggregation techniques.

1. Unit of analysis. The ethnomethodologist strives to operate with no particular unit of analysis in mind. All units are considered potentially useful; no conscious decision about inclusion or exclusion is made a priori.

2. Data sources. In order to test impressions through triangulation, the ethnomethodologist must employ multiple data sources. No single source is considered sufficient and/or valid on its own.

3. Data collection and aggregation. Because the thrust of ethnomethodology is to describe and communicate as fully as possible the multiplicity and complexity of naturally occurring phenomena, predominant data collection and aggregation techniques are qualitative rather than quantitative. Accuracy is stressed at the expense of generality and simplicity. Aggregation focuses not only on locating central tendencies for specific variables but on identifying critical variables and describing a range of responses. Dissensus is as important as consensus.

By switching to an alternative mode of data collection, by tapping multiple sources, by aggregating data qualitatively, new variables and even new images of the organization are manifested. We will find only what we look for, and if we look in new ways and in new places, we will see new things.

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, three types of lenses for viewing organizations have been explored in terms of how they modify inquiry and how they can be used to enrich our understanding of organizations. Projective "visions" were used to depict the impact of alternative beliefs on what we see in organizations. Table 2 summarizes the more traditional and the emerging ways of studying organizations and organizing.

By becoming aware of the biases we hold and the blinders we wear, we can better come to understand the limits of singular views and the complementarities across multiple views. We can experiment with new perspectives, new lenses, and new images.

Table 2

Looking at Organizations: The Focuses of Traditional and Illustrative Alternative Perspectives

Lens	Focus	
	Traditional Perspectives	Illustrative Alternative Perspectives
Cultural context of inquiry	Western • ordered • competitive • pragmatic	Eastern • tolerant of ambiguity • paternal • harmonious
Images of organizing	Bureaucratic • structural focus • rational, sequential processes • goal-based	Marketplace Model • interactive focus • incentive exchange processes • participant satisfaction
Images of inquirers and inquiry	Logical Positivism • value-free • certain • external observation Quantitative Procedures • generality • organization-wide perspective • simplicity	Phenomenology • value-laden • ambiguous, situational • participatory observation Qualitative Procedures • accuracy • individual perspective • complexity

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II

AN INVENTORY OF ALTERNATIVES TO THE BUREAUCRATIC PERSPECTIVE

Interposition

No single theory, model, or perspective has emerged that challenges classical theory in all its comprehensiveness and detail. But then, none of the alternatives has been worked on for a century! In the first paper of this section, Clark summarizes 10 points of view that contest (or merely complement) the bureaucratic one; these represent the current state-of-the-art in organizational theorizing. Some of them enjoy wide applicability in educational settings; others are slanted toward special-purpose organizations and/or subunits. However, all of these views should augment the understanding to be derived from the bureaucratic perspective.

Interorganizational theory has just begun to break away from the rational bureaucratic model. In this section's second paper, Baker inventories the alternatives that have been generated specifically in reference to interorganizational arrangements, and illustrates the implications of new views for individual organizations participating in such multiple-unit arrangements.

A SAMPLER OF ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND MODELS FOR VIEWING EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

David L. Clark

This essay has a position to sell: if you can employ a variety of conceptual structures while studying organizations (or living and working in organizations), you will do better and learn more. In the literatures of public and business administration, sociology, and social and industrial psychology, an increasing number of provocative perspectives that supplement or challenge the conventional bureaucratic model have arisen in recent years. Ten of these alternative perspectives have been chosen for inclusion in this sampler, using three criteria: (1) frequency of citation in the current literature; (2) likely application to educational settings; and (3) exemplification of the range of alternatives being discussed in the literature. Four of the perspectives (those that met all three criteria) have been summarized and an educational application has been described for each. In the other six cases (where one or two criteria were met), the perspective has been capsulized very briefly and its relationship to education noted. Readers will obviously need to pursue further any model or perspective that interests them. The reference list and bibliography at the end of the section are designed to assist in this effort.

Loosely Coupled Systems

No new construct has attracted more attention than the conception of organizations as loosely coupled systems. Perhaps this is because the notion of loose coupling strikes so obviously at the heart of bureaucratic theory; or because the prime spokesperson for the concept has broadened its applicability by refusing to restrict the definition of "loosely coupled," preferring instead to "image" loose coupling with "relaxed meanings and thick interpretations" (Weick, Note 1); or perhaps it is simply because those who have used the perspective have found it illuminating. Whatever the reason, the view that organizations consist of units, processes, actions, and individuals that are typically connected loosely rather than tightly is provoking new insights into how and why educational organizations behave as they do.

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Key Ideas

1. "Loose-coupling in organizations is represented by the fact that the actions generated by one agent or element in the organization bear little predictable relationship to the actions of another element or agent" (Salancik, Note 2).

2. Individuals referring to loosely coupled systems may have in mind such diverse situations as: "slack times--times when there is an excessive amount of resources relative to demands; occasions when any one of several means will produce the same end; richly connected networks in which influence is slow to spread and/or is weak while spreading; a relative lack of coordination...; a relative absence of regulations; planned unresponsiveness; actual causal independence; infrequent inspection of activities...; delegation of discretion" (Weick, 1976, p. 5).

3. Loose coupling suggests that the stimulus-response patterns found within most organizations are seldom direct or immediate--instead, they are most often gradual, eventual, occasional, indirect, or ceremonial (Weick, Note 1).

4. Loose coupling is not a system breakdown in need of repair. As a characteristic of organizations it is sometimes dysfunctional, sometimes functional. For example, loose coupling might enable one subunit of an organization to be responsive to environmental changes while the rest of the organization remains stable; it might provide the organizational inattention requisite to creative behavior; or it might isolate breakdowns from other portions of the system (Weick, 1976). Conversely, it may inhibit needed adaptations by reducing pressure on the organization as a whole; may reduce the likelihood that signals of impending failure will be transmitted at crucial points; or may protect incompetent individuals and subunits by isolating them from the attention and control of colleagues. But the point is that variations in the strength of coupling are found in all organizational systems. Once this variable is called to your attention (i.e., once you are able to reject the axiom that all systems are or should be tightly coupled all the time), you can begin to understand organizations and organizing.

Educational Applications

When was the last time a college professor was supervised in the classroom? To what extent is the success of the chemistry department at your high school dependent upon or linked to the English department? Do you have any level of confidence that the five-year planning task force you are chairing will generate plans or operations that will influence what happens in your school or university?

Do you believe that the state plan for vocational or special education will influence the operation of local education agency (LEA) projects? Can you figure out why the third grade teacher pays more attention to the second grade teacher than to the principal--and ignores the principal's memoranda with impunity? Or why the reading project has changed so markedly over the past 18 months while everybody pretends it still reflects the original project proposal?

Educational organizations are archetypal loosely coupled systems. If you examine your school, you are sure to find examples of (1) independence rather than interdependence among units; (2) processes that seem disconnected rather than linked; (3) actions isolated from consequences; and (4) individuals who function with little or no supervision. You will also discover organizational participants who are oblivious to these loose couplings and decouplings, or who deny their existence. But if you can accept strength of coupling as a legitimate variable in educational organizations, new insights will result.

Organized Anarchies and Garbage Can Models

Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) coined the contradictory designation "organized anarchy" to describe organizations that consistently defy portrayal as rational bureaucratic systems. The apparent contradiction in fact reflects the precise flavor intended by the authors--they are after all depicting organizations in which the minimal conditions necessary to support rational bureaucratic theory are missing but in which organized activity is occurring. The "garbage can model" accommodates this situation by suggesting an arational decision-making process in which problem resolution is not the *raison d'etre*.

Key Ideas

1. Organized anarchies are characterized by:

    a. *Problematic preferences*. "In the organization it is difficult to impute a set of preferences to the decision situation.... It discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences" (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972, p. 1).

    b. *Unclear technology*. "Although the organization manages to survive and even produce, its own processes are not understood by its members" (Cohen et al., p. 1).

    c. *Fluid participation*. "Participants vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to different domains; involvement varies from one time to another" (Cohen et al., p. 1).

2. Some of the activities of all organizations some of the time will display the properties of organized anarchy. "They are particularly conspicuous in public, educational, and illegitimate organizations" (Cohen et al., p. 1).

3. Decision situations in organized anarchical settings frequently do not resemble orderly problem-solving configurations. Rather, they are often "sets of procedures through which participants arrive at an interpretation of what they are doing and what they have done while in the process of doing it" (Cohen et al., p. 2). This has led the authors to characterize such situations as collections of:

    a. Choices looking for problems.
    b. Issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired.
    c. Solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer.
    d. Decision makers looking for work.

4. These features lead to the image of choice opportunities as garbage cans in which the mix of "garbage" depends on the flow from several comparatively independent areas of input: solutions, problems, participants, and the choice opportunities themselves.

Educational Applications

The organized anarchy concept and the garbage can model were generated from studies of colleges and universities. Consequently, we would expect them to be applicable to many educational organizations. This is in fact the case. They have been useful in describing and interpreting the early organizing activities of The National Institute of Education (Sproull, Weiner, and Wolf, 1978). Daft and Becker (1978) note the compatability of the garbage can model with their depiction of the process of innovation in secondary school districts. The characterizations at hand are particularly germane to interorganizational arrangements in education (e.g., school study councils, higher education consortia, teacher corps networks), where you can easily observe participants acting out their preferences, proceeding with weakly understood processes, and dropping in and out of the arrangements.

An organized anarchy with its garbage can decision processes introduces a much more complex set of "new lenses" than the concept of loose coupling. A number of variables that are overlooked (or assumed as constants) by the bureaucratic perspective are reopened for examination by this point of view. For example, if unclear preferences are characteristic of your educational R&D center, formulation of a priori goals would be problematic. But if you are acquainted with the nature of organized anarchies, you will realize, as March (1972) has noted, that "one of the primary ways in which the goals of an organization [can be] developed is by interpreting the decisions it makes" (p. 427). Furthermore, technology and fluid participation both beg for flexibility in the design of program elements, arguing against the success of programmed implementation strategies. Surely LEAs will adapt rather than adopt.

However, while these challenges are being raised, local educational organizations and state educational agencies are moving in the direction of institutionalizing goal-based, sequential management systems (e.g., Management by Objectives, competency-based training programs, program planning and budgeting systems); and a number of federal programs are tightening their intervention tactics through the use of highly specified requests for proposals and through screening and approval of innovations by the Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Panel.

Incentive System Paradigm/Marketplace Model

Counterparts of the goal-based model are not all new. Forty years ago Chester Barnard (1938) noted that "the individual is always the basic strategic factor in organization" (p. 139). His view of the role of the individual is the cornerstone of an interesting perspective that would hold that schools exist for teachers, not students; and that if you are interested in understanding behavior in educational organizations, you must first understand how incentives are exchanged in these organizational marketplaces.

Key Ideas

1. "Modes of behavior in all social units (including organizations) are premised on the derivation and contribution of incentives" (Georgiou, 1973, p. 305).
2. The organization is a marketplace in which incentives are exchanged.
3. Although the formal organization is involved in the process of incentive exchange in traditional ways (e.g., salary, fringe benefits, promotions, job security), much incentive exchange also occurs among individuals within and across organizational subunits.
4. Organizational goals or purposes, then, are consistently subordinated to contributors' demands for personal satisfaction and rewards.
5. "The possession of power is a function of the capacity of an individual to contribute incentives to one or many, or even all of the other contributors to the organization" (Georgiou, p. 306).

Educational Applications

Schools exist for teachers, not pupils. The issue is not whether this concept bothers you philosophically, but whether it illuminates your understanding of what happens in educational organizations. (Are schools unique in existing to provide an acceptable marketplace for the exchange of incentives? Not by a Chrysler Cordoba!) Do you believe, for example, that schools, colleges, and universities have responded to recent budgetary constraints and reductions-in-force on the basis of what is best for students? Most people would agree that they have not; that they have responded by doing what was most humane for teachers. The predominant motive for action has been minimizing disruptive change for those for whom the organization exists--its employees.

The ramifications of this perspective bring clarity to many day-to-day operations in schools. For instance, the characteristics that make disseminative innovations desirable just happen to be incentives for teachers (e.g., easy to use, time-saving, easy to adapt). Teachers' individual power and influence patterns are often determined not by their in-school behavior but by external political activities (in union or community) which create the real or imagined ability to manipulate intra-school incentives for their colleagues. Influence within university settings flows toward professorial staff who can provide colleagues with access to grants, professional association appointments, or publication outlets. The power structure (and even the formal structure) of a university department is frequently changed by the acquisition of a single grant that provides opportunities for travel funds and graduate assistantships. External change agents often note that their influence with schools or colleges is directly related to whether grant funds are designated to support incentives important to faculty or staff (in contrast to administrators or boards of control).

Natural Selection Model

The metaphor of the living system has intrigued organizational theorists for decades. Gouldner (1959) suggests that it can ultimately be traced to August Comte's focus on "spontaneous and informal patterns of organization" (p. 404). However, in its earlier forms the metaphor was rooted in an organismic model of the organization which in turn supported the concept of a natural history for organizations: "Long-range organizational development is thus regarded as an evolution, conforming to 'natural laws' rather than to the planner's designs" (Gouldner, p. 406). In the writings of Gouldner, the natural systems model heralded a break from the rational bureaucratic tradition:

> In general, the natural system model tends to induce neglect of the rational structures characterizing the modern organization...tends to focus the analyst's concern on the forces that undermine the organization's impersonal principles and subvert its formal ends to "narrower" interests rather than

> on those that sustain these and bolster the distinctively bureaucratic structures...tends to minimize the role of rationality in human affairs and to counter-stress the way in which organizational behavior is affected by non-rational norms. (Gouldner, 1959, p. 409)

More recent iterations of this metaphoric tradition have placed primary emphasis on the evolutionary dimension of the metaphor and particularly on the effect of the process of natural selection on the organization (Campbell, 1970). The following key ideas are adapted from Weick's (1979) effort to summarize the major elements of what he termed "the sociocultural evolution model."

Key Ideas

1. Evolution is the result of the processes of variation, selection, and retention.
2. Variations that are unjustified rather than rational are emphasized in evolutionary theory. An "unjustified" variation means simply that it is untested. The variation will be generated and tested and might then be labeled justified or rational.
3. Evolution is essentially opportunistic. Variations are selected that lend themselves to short-term adaptation.
4. Selection criteria are numerous and vary from time to time, from organization to organization, from unit to unit within a single organization. "Furthermore, decision makers in organizations intervene between the environment and its effects inside the organization, which means that selection criteria become lodged more in the decision makers than in the environment" (Weick, 1979, p. 125).
5. Retention is obviously the evolutionary process opposed to variation. "In complex systems, the majority of the mechanisms activated at any time tend to curb rather than promote variations" (Weick, 1979, p. 123).

Educational Applications

The natural selection model calls into question the confidence that has been vested in systematic long-range elementary/secondary planning efforts over the past 20 years. For example, the selection model suggests that Career Education, Right to Read, the Office of Education's Experimental Schools Program, and the National Science Foundation's Course Content Improvement Project all failed to take advantage of our knowledge of natural selection processes in organizations. In every instance:

- Planned variations were specified a priori. Unjustified variations were considered too risky to support.

- The variations envisioned long-term adaptation; short-term adaptation would have been judged not cost-effective.

- The variations typically contested the authority of the local decision maker and certainly did not attempt to win his/her support. The local decision maker was perceived as an important part of what needed to be changed, rather than as the on-site or intra-organizational change agent.

- The programs frequently underestimated the factor of retention, assuming that "locals," once exposed to the variation, would fall into line with enthusiasm.

The natural selection model (with its emphasis on short-range change; testing, checking, and deciding; untested variations; basic organizational stability; and the power of organizational decision makers to maintain the gate-keeping role) matches many characteristics of LEAs currently being "discovered" by studies of the educational change process.

A Potpourri of Alternatives

The following six alternative organizational views were chosen for several reasons:

- The Marxian and dialectical views, the most dramatic of the alternatives, represent departures from all competing organizational perspectives. However, it appears unlikely that they will come to dominate organizational thought in the near future; to date, they have received scant attention from empirical inquirers. Heydebrand (1977) notes,

  > A Marxian theory of organizations will not become paradigmatic in the social sciences unless there is sufficient consensus among the community of scholars--that is, unless there is some degree of ideological consensus as to the explanatory and interpretive power of such a theory. For obvious reasons, such an ideological self-transformation of academic organizational theory is highly unlikely. (p. 104)

  However, both of these perspectives are likely to receive increasing attention; both suggest valuable explanations for behaviors in educational organizations.

- Adaptive implementation is an alternative view of a single organizational process. There are a variety of such alternatives that focus on the processes of planning, the assessment of organizational effectiveness, decision making, and the like. These micro-perspectives often draw upon macro-structures but frequently add new views of their own that will subsequently be incorporated as macro-structures. This particular view was derived from a study of the implementation of innovations in educational organizations and has already attracted widespread attention as a perspective on the change process in education.

- The collectivist and clan views are less widely discussed alternatives, but they still have many applications in educational organizations. They are included as a "best guess" as to the new views that might catch on in the study of schools and colleges.
- The institutional organization is an example of a sociological perspective with its roots embedded deeply in empirical studies of colleges and schools. Consequently, it is likely to have both high validity and applicability as regards educational organizations.

The following brief treatment is obviously a primer, boasting precious little detail. However, a key reference for each perspective is presented, which in turn will open up additional sources for the reader. The selected bibliography that follows the references also lists relevant supporting literature.

Now to introduce you to the alternatives:

Marxian Perspective

Marxian analysts argue that traditional organizational theory emerged from and reflects the ideological belief system of capitalism. Heydebrand (1977) suggests a few implications of an alternative view based on Marxian categories:

> 1. Organizations, like other social structures, must be studied in terms of the historical processes that gave rise to them so that the potential contradictions between established organization and the organizing processes become visible....
>
> 2. The viability of social structure should be measured not so much in terms of the duration, temporal stability, and growth or size of its subunits such as organizations, but in terms of the rate at which they are generated and the rate at which new forms are emerging or old forms are disappearing....
>
> 3. Treating organizations as integral "actors" or "in action" is an abstraction which hides the specific constellation of groups and actors within organizations and mystifies the specific interests which different groups and actors have in the shape and output of organizations....

> 4. Organizations vary in significant ways in the extent to which structural contradictions have already developed within them, both qualitatively, and in the extent to which these contradictions have become conscious to the participants. (p. 91)

The most seductive aspect of the Marxian perspective is expressed in the last phrase of the Heydebrand quotation--it can serve to make conscious the unrecognized structural contradictions in educational organizations. The simplest way to demonstrate the potential cogency of the Marxian perspective as it applies to education is to refer to the structural elements of American schools pre-1954, which supported de facto segregation throughout the country with little or no question. Only the Marxian and dialectical views highlight the relationship between class structure and organization. More currently, Marxian analysis of the conflict between innovations and professional authority structures would have predicted the negative reaction of teacher unions to demands for proof of productivity (such as minimal competency testing).

Dialectical View

The dialectical view, an extraction of Marxist analysis, is "fundamentally committed to the concept of process....Theoretical attention is focused upon the transformation through which one set of arrangements gives way to another" (Benson, 1977, p. 3). The principles of dialectical analysis are:

> Social Construction/Production
> Relationships are formed, roles are constructed, institutions are built from the encounters and confrontations of people in their daily round of life.
>
> Totality
> ...a commitment to study social arrangements as complex interrelated wholes with partially autonomous parts.
>
> Contradiction
> The social order produced in the process of social construction contains contradictions, ruptures, inconsistencies, and incompatibilities in the fabric of social life. Radical breaks with the present order are possible because of contradictions.

> Praxis
> ...[is] the free and creative reconstruction of social arrangements on the basis of a reasoned analysis of both the limits and the potentials of present social forms....Dialectical analysis contributes to this process in part by dereifying established social patterns and structures--points out their arbitrary character, undermines their sense of inevitability, uncovers the contradictions and limits of the present order, and reveals the mechanisms of transformation. (Benson, 1977, pp. 3-5)

Living at the vulnerable edge of social change, colleges and schools have learned, often at the cost of great pain and rupture, what it means to dereify long-standing structures that have for instance served to (1) support the isolation of the handicapped from their "normal" peers; (2) exclude racial groups from advanced educational opportunities by testing; (3) segregate women in education by roles and educational levels; (4) limit educational opportunities for minorities and women through privileged placement networks; and, of course, (5) segregate schools by race in the name of such reifications as the "neighborhood school." The dialectical view would have provoked uncertainty about such structural elements as special classes, standardized tests, counseling practices affecting women, informal job placement networks, and neighborhood schools at a considerably earlier point in the development and maintenance of these structures.

Adaptive Implementation

Not all of the new perspectives are as comprehensive as the two just summarized. Some concentrate on a single aspect of organizational functioning. For example, Paul Berman (Note 3) has proposed a new view of the implementation process. He argues that education has relied on a programmed approach to implementation that frequently has not fit the situational parameters in which the change is to be installed. Berman specifies five such parameters that determine whether a programmed approach is called for or whether a more adaptive strategy would be appropriate:

Matching Implementation to Situation

Situational Parameters	Implementation Approach	
	Programmed	Adaptive
Scope of Change	minor	major
Certainty of Technology or Theory	certain within risk	uncertain
Conflict Over Policy's Goals and Means	low conflict	high conflict
Structure of Institutional Setting	tightly coupled	loosely coupled
Stability of Environment	stable	unstable

(Berman, Note 3)

Change agents, administrators, faculty, and concerned laypersons have all felt, from time to time, that nothing works in education. They have accused one another of everything from sloth to conspiracy to account for the failure of innovations to spread and/or to produce effects. Berman suggests that our very view of how implementation occurs has interfered with our ability to design and carry out implementation strategies. Educators have typically assumed that programmed implementation is the one efficient, accountable, effective strategy, when in fact it appears to meet the situational parameters of few educational implementation circumstances. The inordinate implementation difficulties that plague educational settings could perhaps be better understood with the help of an anlysis of the impact of Berman's situational parameters.

Collectivist Perspective

During the last several years, interest in collectives as alternative institutional forms has increased. In education, collectivist alternative schools have appeared--although the alternative schools movement as a whole has adopted a generally conservative form, most often within the public school organizational framework. The following ideal portrayal, quoted from Rothschild-Whitt (1979, p. 519), suggests some outer limits of a collectivist-democratic form that might be adapted for use in educational settings:

Ideal Depiction of Collectivist-Democratic Organizations

Dimensions	Characterization
1. Authority	1. Authority resides in the collectivity as a whole; delegated, if at all, only temporarily and subject to recall. Compliance is to the consensus of the collective which is always fluid and open to negotiation.
2. Rules	2. Minimal stipulated rules; primacy of ad hoc, individuated decisions; some calculability possible on the basis of knowing the substantive ethics involved in the situation.
3. Social Control	3. Social controls are primarily based on personalistic or moralistic appeals and the selection of homogeneous personnel.
4. Social Relations	4. Ideal of community. Relations are to be wholistic, personal, of value in themselves.
5. Recruitment and Advancement	5a. Employment based on friends, social-political values, personality attributes, and informally assessed knowledge and skills.
	5b. Concept of career advancement not meaningful; no hierarchy of positions.
6. Incentive Structure	6. Normative and solidarity incentives are primary; material incentives are secondary.
7. Social Stratification	7. Egalitarian; reward differentials, if any, are strictly limited by the collectivity.
8. Differentiation	8a. Minimal division of labor: administration is combined with performance tasks; division between intellectual and manual work is reduced.
	8b. Generalization of jobs and functions: wholistic roles. Demystification of expertise: ideal of the amateur factorum.

The collectivist perspective is less effective if applied to entire educational organizations. However, in the context of subunits (e.g., a project or program work group), informal cross-organizational groupings, (e.g., invisible colleges), and ad hoc committees, councils, or task forces, the applications are more provocative. The use of the collective to attain utopian ends in education has been a tantalizing proposition. Using this approach, innovators have created experimental colleges, laboratory schools, and avant garde alternative schools, all with limited success. Perhaps this perspective might prove more useful if brought to bear on micro-collectives within our more conventional macro-organizational structures.

Organizations as Clans

Ouchi (1980) contends that when performance ambiguity is high but incongruence on goals or objectives is low, the most efficient and effective basis for organizing is probably the "clan." Clans are characterized by Ouchi (Note 4) as displaying:

1. Agreement among members on what constitutes proper behavior.
2. A shared idea of legitimate authority, often grounded in traditional rather than rational forms.
3. An information system contained in rituals and ceremonies which reflect the beliefs and values of the organization.
4. Stable staffing patterns.
5. Selective recruitment; intensive socialization; ceremonial forms of output and behavior control.

This characterization seems to apply to a number of educational settings. Many educational R&D organizations approximate it. Universities as a whole do not; but a number of graduate-level departments do come close.

The maverick urban school is an interesting example of the possible application of this perspective. Over the past decade, many researchers have documented the existence of public schools located in center-city urban areas with a concentration of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils who exhibit high achievement. What allows such schools to escape the predicted student under-achievement? Descriptions of these schools do not make them sound like "loosely coupled systems" or "organized anarchies." Neither do the schools rely on the structures of a conventional bureaucratic unit. Reports from observers emphasize such features as agreement on proper behavior, respect for legitimate authority, and shared beliefs and values. Perhaps the clan perspective would be useful in understanding these exceptional units.

Institutional Organizations

Meyer, Scott, and Deal (Note 5) contend that the activities of educational organizations are not like industrial production processes. The concept of the institutionalized organization better explains the structure and activities of schools. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that organizations fall along a continuum from production organizations such as automobile manufacturers, in which success is measured by high output, to institutionalized organizations like schools, in which success depends "on the confidence and stability achieved by isomorphism with institutional rules" (p. 354). In schools and colleges, the motivation to conform to institutional rules manifests itself as a quest for status designations such as accreditation of the institution and certification of students. Meyer, Scott, and Deal note that "schools which are in any way suspect in terms of their legitimacy or accreditation status suffer drastically lowered survival prospects, irrespective of what evidence they have regarding their instructional effectiveness" (p. 5).

The proper work process of schools is of course instructional activity. But because schools are institutionalized organizations, the institutionalized forms of the work process (accreditation and certification) become more important than the activity itself. And finally the organization comes to be motivated by conformity to the institutional rules rather than the pursuit of its business--instruction.

Summary and Conclusions

This has been a long (albeit grossly over-simplified) journey through a range of alternative perspectives from which one might address educational organizations. Let us review these perspectives, noting some insights each might provide.

1. Loosely coupled systems--Organizational functions often assumed to be sequential and responsive (e.g., goal setting and operating activities) may, in fact, be neither sequential (activities may precede goals) nor responsive (activities may not match goals).

2. Organized anarchies--Schools, colleges, and other educational agencies display problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. They seldom solve problems and, in most instances, would not know if a problem had been solved.

3. Incentive system paradigm--Personal satisfactions and rewards supercede organizational goals/purposes in determining organizational actions.

4. Natural selection model--Most changes that occur in educational systems are short-term adaptations, untested, opportunistic, based on idiosyncratic selection criteria.

5. Marxian perspective--Organizations, organizational forms, and the structures employed to study them are creatures of the historical processes that gave rise to them. Many of the structural contradictions in educational organizations are overlooked because they support pervasive social values.

6. Dialectical view--If structural elements of educational organizations can be dereified, they can be examined for what they are--organizational variables, alternative structural characteristics, optional organizational forms.

7. Adaptive implementation--In most organizations most of the time, programmed implementation of innovations will fail because they are not responsive to the school context.

8. Collectivist perspective--In many organizational subunits and ad hoc groups in education, authority resides in the collectivity; social controls, relations, and organizational rewards are primarily personalistic; and the organizational status structure is egalitarian.

9. Organizations as clans--The clan concept may best explain the maverick urban school or, for that matter, the elite graduate school. The process of socialization is the source of control.

10. Institutionalized organizations--Schools and colleges can be better understood if one assumes that their success depends on their ability to conform to social or institutional rules (accreditation, certification) rather than their ability to enhance student achievement.

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PERSPECTIVES ON INTERORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Lynn E. Baker

Educational agencies are faced with a growing number of mandates and incentives to coordinate and collaborate; to enter into interorganizational arrangements for sharing and exchanging resources. Public policy makers often assume that improved coordination among agencies is a direct route to more efficient and effective policy implementation. This is evidenced by the trend toward having federal and state funding be tied to (or biased in favor of) the formation and maintenance of collaborative arrangements among programs concerned with education, social welfare, rehabilitation, and corrections.

In addition to external mandates to collaborate or cooperate, intra-organizational decision makers have their own reasons for favoring the formation of interorganizational arrangements. They sometimes view such arrangements as opportunities to increase their efficiency and ability to achieve organizational goals; to capture new resources; to respond to conditions of scarce resources; to reduce their uncertainty and increase their control over the environment.

The structures and processes of interorganizational agreements are as varied as are the reasons for entering into them. They often involve arrangements to share information, funds, clients, staff, programs, materials, equipment, and facilities. Organizational interaction may involve interlocked planning, service delivery, and evaluation activities. Interactions may be formal or informal; mandated or voluntary; frequent or infrequent; simple or complex; partial or comprehensive. The variety of permutations and combinations of interorganizational arrangements suggests a reason for their popularity as vehicles for shaping and implementing public policy and school improvement. They are sufficiently imprecise and diverse to give the appearance of being able to solve organizational, social, and educational problems of many types and origins.

The Exchange Model

Until recently, interorganizational theory and research has been dominated by the exchange model (Levine and White, 1961): a model that attempts to combine the rational, bureaucratic perspectives of intra-organizational theory with the free market models of economic theory. Levine and White define exchange as "any voluntary activity between two organizations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realization of their respective goals or objectives" (p. 588). The leadership of each organization is presumed to be motivated to form and maintain the exchange relationship by a belief that the arrangement will allow for more efficient use of scarce resources than is possible through autonomous action.

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Functions of Interorganizational Arrangements

Exchange theory depicts organizations as existing in environments with other organizations that are pursuing their own goals. In order to attain its goals, an organization must possess or control certain elements and resources (clients, labor services, funds, equipment, and specialized knowledge). Since these necessary elements and resources are likely to be scarce or spread unevenly, they frequently must be obtained by individual organizations through arrangements with others in the system. These elements are obtained through exchange.

> Organizational goals or objectives are derived from general (system) values. These goals or objectives may be viewed as defining the organization's ideal need for elements--consumers, labor services, and other resources. The scarcity of elements, however, impels the organization to restrict its activity to limited specific functions. The fulfillment of these limited functions, in turn, requires access to certain kinds of elements, which an organization seeks to obtain by entering into exchange with other organizations. (Levine and White, 1961, p. 587)

The exchange model focuses on the flow of elements among organizations engaged in service delivery. For example, within the system of health agencies, Levine and White note that treatment organizations need referrals (clients) and funds from other agencies in order to carry out the functions of disease treatment. Similarly, in communities with several colleges and universities, these institutions often adjust their courses and degree or certification programs to insure an adequate flow of students to each college. In fact, they may also extend the arrangements to provide for shared facilities, personnel, and equipment.

Factors Affecting Agency Interactions

While the objectives and functions of the organization establish the range of possibilities for the exchange of elements, the patterns of interaction and degree of interdependency are affected by the scarcity of organizational resources and the degree of domain consensus between organizations. Levine and White (1961) argue that:

> Were all the essential elements in infinite supply there would be little need for organizational interaction and for subscription to cooperation as an ideal. Under actual conditions of scarcity, however, interorganizational exchanges are essential to goal attainment. (p. 587)

Exchanges among organizations are obviously influenced by the domains of the organizations:

> The goals of the organization constitute in effect the organization's claim to future functions and to the elements requisite to these functions, whereas the present or actual functions carried out by the organization constitute de facto claims to these elements. Exchange agreements rest upon prior consensus regarding domain. (Levine and White, 1961, p. 597)

Organizations laying claim to the same domain are almost certain to compete. Those with no domain consensus find one another irrelevant. Without at least minimal domain consensus, exchange is unnecessary. Exchange theory is based upon a goal-oriented, rational perspective in which:

1. Participation in the interorganizational arrangement is voluntary.
2. Members anticipate mutual gains or benefits from the relationship.
3. The nature of the interaction among the participants is characterized by a cooperative, problem-solving mode.

Alternative Models of Interorganizational Arrangements

Two broad perspectives, the political economy model and the dialectical model, have been applied more recently to the analysis of interorganizational arrangements.

The Political Economy Model

Benson (1975) attempts to integrate resource and power patterns into a political-economic framework for viewing interorganizational arrangements. This perspective concentrates on the network of organizations as the primary unit of analysis and moves the focus of concern from perceived benefits and service delivery to resource acquisition.

In this view, the primary function of an interorganizational arrangement is the pursuit of resources, i.e., authority and money. Authority provides the organization with legitimation of its activities and assurance of its right and responsibility to carry out certain programs. Legitimation permits the organization to operate in a certain sphere; to define established and proper procedures within that sphere; and to claim support for its particular activities. Money provides the organization with the capacity to mount its programs, recruit and retain personnel, purchase buildings and equipment, and acquire other elements necessary to exercise its legitimate authority.

The nature of interorganizational relations is governed by (1) differential power and control exercised by organizations within the network in their pursuit of the scarce resources of money and power; (2) environmental forces and conditions that affect network relations; and (3) a "superstructure" of political sentiments and interactions. These latter vary in linked patterns within the political-economic substructure in which they exist, seeking balance or equilibrium. Benson (1975) defines these elements seeking equilibrium as:

> Domain Consensus: Agreement among participants in organizations regarding the appropriate role and scope of an agency.
>
> Ideological Consensus: Agreement among participants in organizations regarding the nature of the tasks confronted by the organizations and the appropriate approaches to those tasks.
>
> Positive Evaluation: The judgment by workers in one organization of the value of the work of another organization.
>
> Work Coordination: Patterns of collaboration and cooperation between organizations. Work is coordinated to the extent that programs and activities in two or more organizations are geared into each other with a maximum of effectiveness and efficiency. (pp. 235-236)

This model emphasizes that these components of cooperative interaction and sentiment are "dependent upon the alignment of political-economic forces. These forces place restrictive limits upon the range of potential variation in equilibrium components" (p. 238). Therefore, "change agents who attempt to alter the superstructure of sentiments and interactions without attending to underlying political-economic conditions can be successful only within a restricted range" (p. 248).

The Dialectical Model

A dialectical view of interorganizational arrangements offered by Zeitz (1980) moves sharply away from the exchange model's emphasis on cooperation, consensus, and problem solving. The dialectical perspective asserts that:

> Organizations construct major portions of their environments through the production of resources and through their control of interaction networks;
>
> Organizational actions and interactions are channeled and constrained through structured resources and through networks of relationships;
>
> Conflict between organizations is both system-integrative and system-disintegrative, as the resolution of old conflicts leads to generation of new ones; and
>
> The production of interorganizational research has reactive effects on interorganizational networks. (p. 73)

The concept of "the dialectics of resource externalization" is a central feature of this model. Resource externalization is presumed to occur in three stages: first resource dependency, followed by a stage of resource manipulation and active control over environments, and concluding with persistent structures upon which organizations again become dependent. Thus, the environment that an organization creates and controls later impinges on it.

The dialectical model also provides a paradoxical perspective on organizational cooperation. Zeitz uses the phrase "antagonistic cooperation" to capture the dialectical nature of conflict and teamwork. Both are likely to be present at different stages in the interaction process. Frequently, both are present at the same time in a relationship, depending upon whom you talk to. While one decision maker may feel enthusiastic about her organizational interactions with a collaborator, the partner may feel that she has too much control over his "business," and may be actively considering ways to increase his discretion and independence. Consequently, Zeitz cautions against static conceptions that overlook the ongoing negotiations that continually restructure interagency relationships. He suggests that the resolution of conflict simply provides the basis for new conflict, and that:

> Some hidden basis of unequal exchange will lead eventually to further imbalances and then overt conflict....Potential conflicts between groups become intense and overt when developing inequality and irrationality decreases the rewards of "normal" operation and increases the amount to be gained by alternative arrangements. (p. 83)

Variables Affecting Interorganizational Arrangements

A number of researchers and theoreticians have recently examined those variables that extend or challenge the exchange theory of interorganizational arrangements.

Formality

Hall, Clark, Giordance, Johnson, and Van Roekel (1977) have noted that exchange theory emphasizes voluntary, informal relationships among organizations. Hall et al. report that interorganizational relationships operate differently depending on whether they are voluntary, mandated by law, or based on formal agreements. The researchers used survey data to measure the degree of coordination among members of agencies involved in dyadic relationships. The most striking aspect of their findings

> was that coordination was achieved through different means, depending upon the basis for the interaction. Under each condition (voluntary, formal agreement, or mandate) there were strong relationships with coordination. The strongest prediction was found when there was a formal agreement, suggesting that reaching a formal agreement was itself a step toward coordination. (p. 467)

The exchange model seemed not to account for power relationships in mandated organizations:

> When the basis of interaction is a legal mandate the power issue is apparently resolved to the extent that it does not become part of the pattern. This is not to say that there are no power differences, but that these have apparently been accepted by the parties involved and are no longer an issue. Conflict is disruptive in legally mandated situations and a positive assessment of the organizations involved is important for coordination. (p. 470)

Power

Cook (1977) has examined the effects of differential power among organizations in an interorganizational arrangement. She presents the proposition that in any exchange relationship, if organization A has a power advantage, then A's use of power will increase across continuing transactions as a function of the power advantage. However, the use of such power is not cost-free to the more powerful organization: over time, each organization becomes dependent on the resource transfer. Consequently, the use of power tends toward balance as the exchange is prolonged; and the flexibility of each partner is limited since the exploration of other alternatives is defaulted.

An organization seeks to form exchange relationships that cost the least in terms of autonomy and power:

> Powerful or dominant organizations are more likely to enter into symbiotic relations with organizations performing dissimilar functions in order to protect their autonomy as well as to protect against a loss of power. On the other hand, weaker or less powerful organizations have less influence upon the nature of the exchange relationship unless due to conditions of supply and demand the element they produce increases in demand, thus giving the weaker organization power with respect to exchanges of that particular element. Under conditions of scarcity of resources, less powerful organizations performing similar functions...are likely to form cooperative relations in order to gain competitive advantage. (p. 77)

Novelty

Molnar and Rogers (1979) have noted the "liability of newness" when newer organizations attempt to link themselves interorganizationally with more mature organizations:

> Age differences may generate structural conflict between new groups trying to establish or expand their domains and existing groups seeking to minimize threats and disruptions to their ongoing activities....New organizations are at a distinct disadvantage in an established network of organizations because boundary personnel may not possess an accumulated set of information ties that facilitate the resolution of operating conflicts....A final liability of newness is the lack of stable ties to those who use organizational services....[Client groups] are less familiar with [the newer oganization's] outputs and may be less readily disposed to accommodate changes.
>
> The lack of client support discourages ties with outside groups, and interorganizational age differences may increase the likelihood of conflict between groups that would exploit the other's disadvantaged position. (p. 414)

Conflict

Molnar and Rogers (1979) have investigated "structural" and "operational" conflict in interorganizational arrangements. Structural conflicts emerge when the rules that govern such relationships are contradictory; operational conflict arises over the interpretation or application of the rules. Molnar and Rogers argue that most operational conflicts are grounded in structural conflicts.

Perceptions of conflict are increased by the existence of mandates to coordinate. Molnar and Rogers urge that more attention be given to the legal-political context of interorganizational relationships. Regarding the special impact of federal and state involvement, they report that:

> Conflicts between federal agencies more often resulted from structural features designed into the system, whereas conflict between state agencies seemed more likely to emerge in the interaction process. Federal programs are not comprehensively rational, and inconsistencies between, and even within, agencies manifest themselves most directly on the operating level, where the various organizational missions are interwoven in response to natural resource problems and local needs.
>
> Conflict between the state agencies, however, most often occurred over the division of joint responsibilities falling between the functions and budgets of specific units.
>
> Many state agency conflicts seemed to revolve around the low priority some administrators placed on responsibilities to joint activities they viewed as peripheral to their central interest or function. (p. 421)

The investigators' results indicate that interdependence and similarity of client groups and domains increase the likelihood of conflict, because these overlaps "seemed to engender greater awareness of discrepancies in organizational purpose and direction" (p. 420). Common lines of authority or coordination, while generally thought to reduce uncertainty and unpredictability, actually have the effect of (1) heightening organizational sensitivity to discontinuities and discrepancies in the relationship and (2) increasing the likelihood of conflict.

Complexity

Stern (1979) notes that relationships between organizations can be characterized by "the number of ties and amount of material which connect any two units" (p. 245). The more purposes involved in the linkage, the stronger the ties. For example, Stern reports multiplexity as a powerful determinant factor in the transformation of the NCAA from a loose voluntary confederation into an agency with dominant control over intercollegiate athletics:

> The relatively rapid creation of multipurpose linkages between the association and member schools was a critical factor in emerging NCAA dominance of the network....The accumulation of services designed to fulfill member needs also tied members more firmly to the association. (p. 258)

Implications of Organizational Theory for Interorganizational Arrangements

Not much energy has been directed specifically at discovering alternatives to the rational systems view in understanding interorganizational relationships. However, recently developed alternatives that have been applied to intra-organizational environments seem highly applicable to the interorganizational field.

Is interorganizational structuring illuminated by the concept of loosely coupled systems? Absolutely, if the organizations are educational ones. They simply become loosely coupled arrangements of loosely coupled organizations; connections are usually tenuous and easily disrupted; the core activity of the interorganizational arrangement in education is seldom the core activity of the participating organizations considered singly.

Cohen, March, and Olson (1972) have characterized educational institutions as organized anarchies: settings where preferences are problematic, technology unclear, and participation fluid. If this is an accurate characterization, its features will probably be amplified in an interorganizational arrangement. Let us turn to a metaphor and a case example to illustrate how intra-organizational studies and theory can illuminate and diversify the way we think about interorganizational arrangements.

A Metaphor: "Normal" Conflict

All through the literature on organizing, it is suggested that such and such a perspective, case, or model is applicable to interorganizational arrangements. For example, a conceptual framework developed by Perrow (Note 1) to explain "normal" accidents in nuclear plants serves as an interesting metaphor for "normal" conflict within interagency relationships. Normal conflicts can be thought of as emerging from the characteristics of relationships themselves. In this sense they are "normal" and in this sense they cannot be prevented. Such "normal" conflict in interagency relationships shares some salient characteristics with normal accidents:

- Signals of impending conflict are perceived as warnings only in retrospect, making prevention and early adjustment difficult.
- Multiple structural and operational inconsistencies are unavoidable.
- Individual variations and inconsistent behaviors are seldom considered until the logic and details of the conflict are more fully understood; thus early preventive responses are seldom possible.
- This leads to "negative synergy" whereby the results of structural, operational, and individual inconsistencies are far greater than the sum of the consequences of each singly.

The more complex the arrangement, the more interdependent and interactive the relationship, the more likely it is that conflict will occur. We can expect conflict, but we cannot anticipate its particularities nor can we prevent its occurrence.

A Case Example: Interorganizational Passages

Might interorganizational arrangements display distinctive "stages of life," at least in their initial years? We shall borrow the stages of adult development identified by Gail Sheehy in Passages (1976) to use as a framework here.

Forming Stage--"Solo Flight." The birth of an interorganizational arrangement is a situation of considerable uncertainty and tenuousness. Yet, as with any birth, it is likely to be characterized by considerable optimism, with interactions centered around visions of the future. Sarason (1972), in his discussion of the creation of new settings, suggests that "those who create a setting almost always see themselves as different or special, as improving on what already exists, or has gone before, as being the prisoners, so to speak, of a sense of mission" (p. 14).

It is against this optimistic backdrop that members engage in planning and formation activities. In their efforts to assure a successful "solo flight," participants in the new arrangement are likely to over-plan and to be overly rationalistic. They frequently spin out intricate lists of rules and standard operating procedures and formulate elaborate timelines. It is at this point that participants begin to converge on means to achieve their mission. Everything seems possible since nothing has been demonstrated to be impossible.

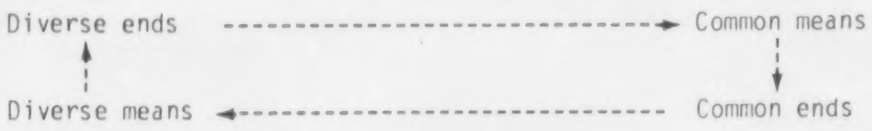
The forming stage has two critical points of adaptation. First, something must occur or the arrangement will lose all its vitality, even its viability, before it has ever lived. Second, the participants must ground their optimism in reality or they will not make it to stage two before irreconcilable differences have emerged among them.

Merging Stage--"What Will We Do With Our Lives?" Although considerable energy has already gone into planning and specifying the interagency arrangement, there comes a point when members suddenly realize that this planning has gone on in a vacuum. Now they are faced with the problem of operating their arrangement in the real world, and they realize that they have to rethink what they are actually going to do. At this point *the process of means-convergence begins*.

Weick's (1979) description of the process of means-convergence will help us understand the developmental nature of interorganizational relationships--especially their tendency to change no matter how much attention managers give to the maintenance of stable relationships. Weick formally describes means-convergence as a

> four-stage model of group development in which people agree to exchange means and to facilitate the accomplishment of one another's designs--whatever they may be--before they try to exchange ends and work toward some common goal. (p. 91)

The model proceeds in a series of stages depicted below:



Weick suggests that cooperating members with diverse interests, capabilities, and preferences initially converge on *common means*. These agreements involve reciprocal actions enabling them to better achieve their idiosyncratic goals.

> A basic property of reciprocal actions is that a member emits some behavior, *any behavior*, which is valuable to the other person; in return the member receives a behavior that is valuable. There is no immediate requirement for a shared goal. Rather, there is a commitment to pursue diverse ends through the common means of collectively structured behavior. (p. 92)

After this means-convergence, a subtle shift occurs toward the development of common ends, in which diverse ends begin to be subordinated to emergent, shared goals.

> One of the initial [common] ends...is that of preserving and perpetuating the collective structure which has been instrumental in aiding individuals to get what they want. (p. 92)

However, groups do not remain in this stage of common ends for long. They appear to follow a developmental sequence in which common ends shift to diverse means. Weick suggests several reasons for this shift.

> First, when some convergence on common ends has occurred, it is typical to find that groups implement a division of labor to aid task performance. They exploit with greater intensity the unique resources that are available. Thus, members are valued more for what they do not share with others than for what they share. And, as Merton (1940) has shown, when tasks are specialized, persons tend to become more attentive to their component task and less concerned with the larger assignment of which it is part. They become less concerned with how their contribution will fit with the contribution of others. (p. 93)

Weick suggests that a second reason for this shift lies in the previous two stages (common means and common ends), where behaviors of

> accommodation, convergence, concessions, and compromise have been required for the group to remain intact. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that a second dynamic that pushes toward diverse means is that of increased pressure to reestablish and assert uniqueness (Simmel, 1959; Fromkin, Note 2), to demonstrate dissimilarity from associates with whom one has become interdependent. Interdependence does entail costs, and these costs become more apparent at later stages in a group. (p. 94)

And finally, the developmental model completes itself with members once again pursuing diverse ends, resulting from the diversification of means and its corollary idiosyncratic behavior.

Crisis Stage--"Renewal or Decline or...." The metaphor of organizational passages has acted as a sensitizing device for noticing the changing nature of interagency relationships. Weick's means-convergence model makes the point that organizational relationships themselves go through iterative cycles of convergence and divergence. Natural selection images of organizations (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976) suggest that we should direct attention to uncontrollable changes in the external environment surrounding and affecting the interorganizational relationships. The natural selection model

> tends to focus [our] concern on the forces that undermine the organization's impersonal principles and subvert its formal ends to "narrower" interests rather than on those that sustain these and bolster the [interagency] structures. (Gouldner, 1959, p. 409)

Changing environmental forces and contingencies will selectively reinforce and maintain people, agencies, and technologies in gaining their "ecological niches." Efforts to specialize in order to form a more exact "fit" with current environmental and situational conditions may result in retention and support, if the fit is right. However, such specialization and responsiveness carries a risk, for just as environmental forces effectively select out maladaptive arrangements, so efforts by an organization to "fit" externally may create maladaptive internal arrangements with consequent loss of support and demise of the structure.

Summary

Until the mid-70s, the study of interorganizational arrangements was dominated by the exchange model with its emphasis on a goal-based, rational view of organizing. Some competitive perspectives are now emerging, e.g., the political economy and dialectical models, and organizational researchers are beginning to concentrate some attention on these "special" organizations.

Educators and educational policy makers have a major stake in stimulating research on interorganizational arrangements. These arrangements have been advocated so frequently in school improvement efforts, with little empirical or theoretical support, that a few recommendations seem in order:

1. The plethora of interorganizational agencies in education should be subjected to study, analysis, and evaluation.

2. Newer perspectives on organizations and organizing should be applied to the study of these agencies.

3. In the immediate future, logical analysis of the implications of these alternative perspectives for educational interorganizational arrangements should be undertaken.

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III

ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONS:
THREE CASES IN POINT

Interposition

While some theorists have concentrated on the organization qua organization, others have focused on the dynamic elements of organizational life. Ms. Carroll here reviews some new and not-so-new research on communication processes in organizations; this research suggests that the complexities of communication channels, processes, and outputs are not captured by the bureaucratic perspective. Ms. Lotto then extends this theme in her review of research and theory on power in organizations. Finally, Ms. Carroll reviews the sociological literature on sense making that has given rise to the proposition that individuals create their organizational environments.

COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Mary R. Carroll

> An engineer from B&W, Mr. Kelley, was sent to the [nuclear] plant to investigate the accident. Returning to B&W he... then wrote a memo suggesting that all units using this kind of equipment be warned about this improper action....Mr. Kelley's superior, Mr. Dunn, took up the matter and had his memo sent around B&W. Only one engineer responded, and he misunderstood it and dismissed it. Dunn persisted, and the memo, now fathered by a Mr. Novack, made a slow ascent. It was sent over to...customer services, to Mr. Karrasch. He said he gave it to two subordinates, but they do not recall ever seeing it....Months went by....Finally, a Mr. Walters met Karrasch at the water cooler and asked about the memo... Karrasch replied, off-handedly, something to the effect that "It's okay, no problem." Mr. Walters pondered the reply... did it mean there was no problem of going solid, or no problem of uncovering the core, or what? Irresolutely, he left the matter hanging. [Sequence of events preceding the Three Mile Island nuclear accident] (Perrow, Note 1).

Conventional theories of organization are based on the assumption that information signals are transmitted unambiguously by the various links in an organization's communication system. The supposition is made that transmission will be characterized by fidelity and regularity; that communication is directed or orchestrated by some organizational communication leader; and that information is acquired and transmitted solely in support of organizational decision making.

Some alternative perspectives raise questions about this ordered and orderly view of organizational communication. They observe that communication is often characterized by error; by randomness; by communication leaders who are responsive mediums for rather than orchestrators of communication; and by the acquisition and use of information for personal as well as organizational purposes.

The key element in organizational communication is human--the individual organization member assigned to a particular location in the communication structure and responsible for the transmission and reception of circumscribed units of information.

The human agent frequently employs technological aids to communication. These aids range from the typewriter or telephone to computer systems that communicate chiefly with other computer systems. Both the human

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and technological systems operate within an organizational structure which, in conventional theories, has been assumed to define regularized, connected levels, subunits, and channels through which information signals flow. Traditional views of management attune the design of the communication system to the formal structure of the organization, assuming that the quality of communication depends upon congruence between that formal structure and the infrastructure of the communication system.

Traditional perspectives, then, view communication within the organization as the transmission of objective information through human links located at specified points in the organizational structure. The human links may use technological aids to facilitate the production and transmission of information. Careful control of the structure of the system, the role of the human agent, and the use of technological aids is seen as necessary to the exchange of accurate information in a reliable, predictable, useful, and timely fashion.

Alternative views of information exchange within organizations challenge this tidy picture. The question is not whether the human, technological, and structural components of communication sometimes break down--of course they do--but whether such disruptions are the norm and not the exception. Should a manager anticipate an essentially disorderly communication system? Should disorderliness be considered a malfunction to be repaired? or is it the normal, functional mode of communication? The traditional bureaucratic stance and the emerging alternative views of organizations posit diametrically opposed characteristics and outcomes of the communication process:

Conventional Bureaucratic Theory	Alternative Perspectives on Organization
1a) Fidelity	1b) Distortion
2a) Predictability	2b) Uncertainty
3a) Regularity	3b) Variability
4a) Reliability	4b) Instability
5a) Connectedness	5b) Discontinuity

In the sections that follow, emerging challenges from alternative organizational perspectives will be discussed in relation to human and structural links in organizational communication. Although technological error is a significant factor in communication systems, it will not be directly addressed.

The Human Link

> Human beings as transmission units have this characteristic of rationalizing, of filling gaps, of providing outputs that lead to action rather than paralysis. And accompanying these trends are systematic error tendencies over and above random information loss. (Campbell, 1958, p. 311)

Campbell identifies three roles for human links in communication systems. The first and simplest is "the duplicatory transmission assignment" whereby information is relayed by one human agent to another with no intended alteration. The second is "the role of translation, or transformation, in which the majority of the input is changed in output, but without intended loss of complexity or information" (p. 337). For example, information received through electronic impulses might be transformed to written or numerical notation before further transmission. The third role involves decision making functions. Reductive coding is the simplest of these: "reducing a complex input signal into a simpler output language such as off-on, start-stop;" more complex decision-making tasks involve "complex integration and decision functions [that] occur in situations where the person covers multiple input channels and has the task of coding the combined input into an appropriate output language" (p.337). An example of this latter procedure: compiling the results of an evaluation study in preparation for a decision to continue, modify, or terminate an experimental program.

Systematic Error

Campbell (1958) also identifies three general types of error attributable to humans in organizational communication systems. The first involves circumstances in which all of the original informational content is distorted, but can be recovered. For example, a school principal reports a sequence of events with a self-serving overtone that either minimizes or maximizes his/her role or responsibility. The error might be compensated for if recognized--though in most instances it is not. Hence, the distortion will persist as the communication moves through the system.

The second error type involves selective information loss. Campbell notes, "whenever human beings operate at near maximum capacity, selective information loss--undesired reduction of message complexity--is apt to be involved" (p. 336). For instance, administrators are frequently accused of harkening only to that portion of a message that suits their predilections. On further transmission, then, this simplification of message (e.g., failure to detail minor negative outcomes) may also predispose the next information recipient to a position compatible with that of the administrator. The simplification may also be solely a consequence of information overload: the transmitter predicts that the recipient will not have the time and interest to process the complete message.

The third type of error occurs "when a second systematic signal is added to the original input in the process of transmission" [i.e., a type of noise or interference] (p. 336). For example, studies devoted to the acceptance of articles for publication in journals (Crane, 1967; Yoels, 1974; Pfeffer, Salancik, and Lebledici, 1976) and to the allocation of internal research funds by universities (Carroll, Note 2) have consistently demonstrated that departmental prestige is a factor in these decisions, even though prestige is irrelevant to publicly stated criteria.

In such cases, decision outcomes are rendered unpredictable because information outside the assumed realm of consideration is introduced into the decision. A hypothetically neutral element becomes a powerful, unintended, unrecognized signal.

Interpersonal Relationships

A number of studies suggest that variations in the interpersonal communication environment within an organization affect the accuracy of information exchange. Trust between senders and receivers has been demonstrated to be associated with more accurate information exchange (O'Reilly and Roberts, 1974; Read, 1962; Roberts and O'Reilly, 1974; O'Reilly and Roberts, 1976; Zand, 1972). These studies suggest that strong, positive personal relations among members of a communication system can compensate for some of the "normal" systematic error that may occur.

The emphasis on hierarchic structure in organizational communication patterns has led to studies of supervisor-subordinate relationships as a variable affecting communication. These studies tend to support the importance of warm, positive relationships in facilitating communication across organizational levels. In a study of the use of supervisors and peers as information sources, O'Reilly (1977) found that when supervisors are perceived as being strongly supportive of subordinates, the subordinates are much more apt to rely on them as information sources. This study concluded that "supervisory training stressing a supportive or considerate leadership style may be of value when it promotes the availability of information to subordinate decision makers" (p. 635).

As a group, these studies suggest that the personality of the supervisor or leader is a key to organizational communication and to the adequacy and accuracy of the information exchanged during that communication. Traditional theory and research have assumed that organizational leaders play a pivotal role in controlling or directing organizational communication; this assumption has led to studies of how to enhance this function. One alternative view suggests that effective communication leaders might better be viewed as *mediums* for the transmission of messages than as *orchestrators* of organizational communications.

The Leader as Medium

> The followers basically use the leader as a contour gauge. The leader is their medium with respect to the environment. This means that the followers see through the eyes of their leader. He gets the picture for them and reveals various projections of these impressions to them. (Weick, 1978, p. 47)

This portrayal requires that we imagine the communication leader as a mediator between some event or datum and a conclusion or action suggested by that event or datum. Weick (1978) has noted that there are three aspects of a medium that determine its quality. These are: (1) the number of elements available for independent combination, a factor that determines the sensitivity of the medium, (2) the degree of independence of each element, and (3) the degree to which elements are externally rather than internally constrained, with less internal conditioning characteristic of a better medium. Weick argues that "a person becomes a better medium as he uses a greater number of channels and uses them independently of one another when he confronts the world" (p. 40). Weick continues: "When we are insensitive to complexity, we cannot predict or control what our outcomes will be when we deal with [an] environment. And the leader who cannot stabilize the outcomes and keep them constant will lose influence over his followers" (p. 41). Therefore, the communicator must be open to fluctuation, to nuance, to the complexity of the environment in order to more completely and accurately represent it to subordinates. The communicator's appropriate function is not control but selective absorption. Strict limitation of the sources and variety of information to which a communication leader is attentive will handicap his or her work.

In developing the idea of the leader as medium, Weick asserts that many conventional prescriptions transform leaders into poor mediums. He goes on to comment on a "macho mystique" prevalent in writings about leadership:

> Leaders are described as people who take charge, take initiative, initiate structure, and are decisive, firm, consistent, striking, charismatic, forceful and strong. Every one of these tendencies implies that the person exhibiting them will be an inferior medium. (p. 50)

The Structural Link

> Since [police] cars move out of their areas for calls and do not have to report arrival at a call, it is in fact impossible to know the location of cars in or out of service, even when they are requested to give a location....Officers can call 911 operators or dispatchers on the phone; can call via the two way radio, or go in to talk with them (very rare). In general, neither 911 nor dispatchers know what the outcomes of their actions are beyond the receipt of their transmission by a member of the linked sub-system. This means virtually all feedback loops are loose, unofficial, and ad hoc, making the links between the sub-systems and between the communication system and the environment very loose. (Manning, in K. E. Weick [Note 3])

The concept of loose coupling, the notion that organizational structure is often disconnected from its effects, is important to the understanding of communication in educational organizations, particularly the unpredictability and disconnectedness of communication. In fact, loose coupling explains why efforts to "fix" communication breakdowns are frequently harmful. These repair jobs may result in a hopeless overload of the system or the production of useless, repetitive information.

Two characteristics of loosely coupled systems regularly disrupt the flow of communication: constant variables and neutralized feedback. "If some variables or subsystems are constant for a time, then during that time the connections through them are reduced functionally to zero, and the effect is as if the connections have been severed in some material way during that time" (Ashby, 1960, p. 169). Weick (Note 2) further observes that "the important point for organizational theorists is that threshold variables give constancy....As long as a disturbance is below threshold, the variables don't fire and the system is severed." Such "disturbances below threshold" are frequently found in schools. Weick goes on: "For our purposes, the administrator acts as a damper, as a constant variable, as a person who absorbs but does not pass along variation. An administrator is a frozen variable...." When an individual or office functions as a frozen variable, the information input is effectively disconnected from further diffusion in the system. The "information buck" stops there and, for the most part, no one discerns the breakage.

A second characteristic of loosely coupled systems--neutralized feedback--is also of interest in the consideration of organizational communication. "For a tight coupling to form between actions and consequences, there must be swift, accurate feedback of those consequences to the action" (Weick, Note 3). The results of some action may not be useable in determining next steps if "information about the consequences is (1) delayed, (2) neutralized, (3) confounded, (4) aperiodic in the reinforcements it delivers, or (5) forgotten" (Weick, Note 3). (The events at Three Mile Island related in the epigraph of this paper are a good example of this phenomenon.) The tendency of neutralized feedback to increase randomness of communication in educational organizations is noted by Weick:

> Organizational realities such as distance, diverse roles and tasks, infrequent inspection, professional norms respecting autonomy, limited vocabularies, and collective action, the individual effects of which cannot be untangled, all delay, blur and discredit feedback that people may try to give. As feedback becomes less credible and less frequent, actions become less tightly coupled to consequences, and more difficult to coordinate. Continued neutralization of feedback can cut a system to pieces quite as handily as constant variables. (Note 3)

The Utility and Use of Information

> "Use" is an exceedingly ambiguous concept....The phenomenon of use is an amalgam of diverse activities. People can use social science research to clarify the relative advantages of alternative choices, but they also use it conceptually

> to...clarify their own thinking, reorder priorities, make sense of what they have been doing,...justify actions, support positions, persuade others, and provide a sense of how the world works. (Weiss and Bucuvalas, Note 4)

The utility of a piece of information is judged differently by different evaluators. Information considered useful and brought into an organization is subject to further filtering by the individuals who are expected to accept it and use it.

The usefulness of information influences the regularity of information flow among units and individuals in an organization. This flow might become irregular when: (1) information is of varying utility to organizational actors, (2) it is perceived as being of varying utility by them, (3) it is not used because it is perceived to be useless, (4) it is misused.

Decision makers' perception of the usefulness of social science research was examined by Weiss and Bucuvalas (Note 4). They found five factors to be associated with the likelihood of using a study: (1) relevance of the research topic, (2) research quality, (3) conformity of results with expectations, (4) orientation to action, and (5) challenge to the status quo (existing policy). Further analysis of results indicated that respondents used both personal beliefs and organizational policy as distinct criteria for assessing the utility of information. The researchers found little support for the prevalent belief that information acquisition is guided solely by institutional policy needs.

Another problem associated with information usage is the difficulty of sorting out relevant information from other data.

> Whether systems are loosely or tightly coupled, they all face [a] problem with warnings--the signal to noise ratio. Only after the event, when we construct imaginative (and frequently dubious) explanations of what went wrong, does some of the noise reveal itself as a signal. The operators at TMI had to literally turn off alarms; so many of them were sounding and blinking, that signals passed into noise. (Perrow, Note 1)

In the educational world, signals are frequently perceived as noise and noise as signals. Studies conducted on the work of national funding organizations (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974; Leibert, 1976) and universities (Lodahl and Gordon, 1973; Carroll, Note 2) indicate that proposal content sometimes becomes irrelevant, while noise (e.g., institutional affiliation, departmental prestige, colleague prestige and productivity) becomes signal (e.g., the basis for awarding grants).

Summary

The following is a characterization of information flow in most organizations most of the time:

- Human links are the key in an organization's information system. However, the flow of information through these links is subject to distortion, selective retention, and interference. People create systematic error in information transmission.
- The human linkage system's effectiveness in transmitting information is more likely to be bound to personal characteristics of the transmitters than to the quality of the information.
- Organizational leaders are frequently the eyes through which their followers see the organization. However, instead of broadening their followers' vision, leaders typically constrain it by censoring information.
- Information does not flow through organizations--instead, it typically runs into dead-ends; stagnates in isolated organizational groups; is transmitted to uninterested persons; or goes unheeded.
- The quality of information may or may not influence either its dissemination or its use within the organization.
- All organizations suffer simultaneously from information glut and information starvation. And frequently, the organizational leaders and members cannot distinguish between information that nourishes them and information that starves them.
- As one might anticipate, information flow in educational organizations, like the organizational structure itself, is loosely coupled.

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UNDERSTANDING POWER IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Linda S. Lotto

> It is immaterial who owns the gun and is licensed to carry it; the question is who had his finger on the trigger. (Bannester, 1969, p. 386)

Many alternative frameworks or perspectives for viewing organizations have originated from observations of the conflict that arises from the diverse goals and preferences of organizational stakeholders. Some analysts have focused on the organization as a political arena, arguing that the central question of organizing is not "How is the organization doing?" but "Who is losing and who is benefiting from the organization's activities?" (Pfeffer, 1978).

> The break with the past lies in the understanding of the organization as a social formation structured by power relationships. Power is no longer regarded as one among many factors; rather it is increasingly seen as the essential core from which other organizational features proceed. The organization as we encounter it--its goals, technologies, division of labor, etc.--can be understood as an expression of the power of certain interests inside and outside the organization's boundaries. Through the exercise of power, a paradigm is enforced, action premises are established, the relationships between components are arranged, and environmental interchanges are negotiated. (Benson, 1977, p. 10)

"If we are to understand organizations as political systems, we must come to grips with how, why, and when groups mobilize power" (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980, p. 9). Power is central to organizations and organizing because, in the absence of consensus, the preferences of the powerholders are the ones that will be acted upon.

According to Bacharach and Lawler, power has three characteristics:

1. Power is relational. Power is interactive; it cannot exist outside a relationship between individuals, subgroups, structural subunits, or organizations.

2. Power derives from real or perceived dependency relationships. Interaction alone does not create power; rather, it is one party's need for something another may be able to provide that mobilizes power. Power comes into play when we consider how A will fill a given need and whether or not B will provide the necessary resource.

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3. Power is operationalized through sanctions. Parties involved in dependency relationships seek to affect the behaviors of one another through the manipulation of incentives and disincentives. Bacharach and Lawler emphasize two aspects of sanctioning: (1) the probability that the sanction will be applied; and (2) the probability that it will be effective.

With these characteristics in mind, we will now explore intra-organizational power--where it comes from, what it is like, how it is used, and by example how it functions in educational organizations.

Sources of Power

Power can be described variously as a function of individual or subunit control of: (1) designated position (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, and Pennings, 1971; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977; Brown, 1978); (2) incentives (Georgiou, 1973); (3) information (Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1978); (4) expertise (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974, 1977); (5) resources (Hickson et al., 1971); (6) tradition of control (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977); and (7) the organizational paradigm or ethos (Brown, 1978). These sources of power are organizational variables that can be used by participants in a power relationship. Since most authors have dealt with these variables singly, they will be treated individually here. The reader should recognize, however, that the discreteness of these variables is more apparent than real; for example, information can work as an incentive, can be a scarce and necessary resource, and simultaneously can constitute a form of expertise.

Designated Position

Traditional views of organizational structure link power to designated positions. By organizational definition, some positions and tasks are more powerful than others. Positions of designated administrative leadership automatically confer: (1) some measure of formal control over subordinate behavior; (2) control of some intra-unit or intra-organizational resources; (3) access to multiple sources of information; and (4) regularized opportunities to make decisions or participate in decision situations. The actual power residing in a designated position varies markedly by incumbent, situation, time, and context; but traditional or no, positional influence is a source of power that can be used, abused, or ignored by administrative incumbents.

Incentives

Some measure of power--in many instances a significant amount--resides in the hands of all organizational participants. Georgiou (1973) views the organization as a marketplace in which individuals exchange incentives. Power accrues to the participants who control the most valued and scarce of these. Incentives are the rewards offered by one individual to another in exchange for a needed or desired contribution; they include money, time, information, attention, access, material goods, prestige, status, skill, and assistance. All participants contribute some incentives to other participants, and thus all have some measure of intra-organizational power. In general, an individual's power is based on: (1) the nature of the incentives he or she can contribute; (2) the replaceability of that person (with someone who can provide the same incentives); and (3) the dispensability of the proffered incentives.

> Power in organizations is thus highly complex. It reflects organization members' assessment of their own and others' dispensability and replaceability within an intricate network of exchanges. (Georgiou, 1973, p. 308)

Information

Pettigrew (1973) illustrates the effect of control of information on organizational decision making with a case study of a company's selection and purchase of a computer. By manipulating who had what information about the various computers available, a single department head was able, invisibly, to swing the final decision in the direction he favored.

Task differentiation, organizational hierarchies, and designated positions all constrain the flow of information within an organization. The often specialized or detailed information possessed by subordinates allows them a measure of control over superordinates. But obversely, this same feature limits the generalized information resources of subordinates, who seldom have "the whole picture." Power obtained through information alone will of necessity be shared with other information holders and, of course, varies as the value of the information rises and falls over time.

Expertise

Expertise--expert advice, knowledge, or ability--is possessed by individuals and subunits. Expertise is needed by organizations for specific organizational activities (e.g., to teach an advanced algebra course, to develop a new program thrust). From time to time as the organization attempts to cope with ambiguous or uncertain situations, individuals and subunits discover that their expertise is critical; during such periods, their organizational power increases markedly. This power, however, will be constrained by the duration and intensity of organizational uncertainty. As new areas become uncertain, as uncertainty is resolved, the power derived from expertise waxes and wanes.

Resources

Power flows not only to those controlling information and expertise, but also to individuals and subunits with access to or control over resources needed by the organization or by other subunits. Within a university, for example, power accrues to departments with large amounts of external grant and contract support (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974). Most universities are dependent upon the discretionary resources these monies provide; the departments best able to generate these resources become powerholders, able to exercise that power to acquire scarce resources from the organization itself. "Power derived from acquiring resources is used to obtain more resources, which in turn can be used to produce more power--the rich get richer" (p. 470).

Tradition of Control

An obvious and important source of power is power itself. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) suggest that there are three reasons for this.

1. Powerful subunits are able to create an organizational "need" for the competencies, skills, or tasks performed by them; they are able to define critical uncertainties as being within their domain even when that is no longer true.

2. Human beings tend to deal with problems in familiar ways. Hence, problems are assigned to those who currently have credibility and power.

3. Powerholders are often able to institutionalize their power through the creation of legitimate authority, designated positions, and information systems. "The key to institutionalizing power always is to create a device that legitimates one's one authority and diminishes the legitimacy of others" (p. 18).

Organizational Paradigm

The organizational paradigm is the basic set of assumptions, usually implicit, about what sorts of things make up the world, how they act, how they hang together, and how they may be known. In actual practice, such paradigms function as means of imposing control (Brown, 1978, p. 373).

Organizations may appropriately be viewed as continuing processes of enactment through which individuals order and make sense of their experiences, negotiate meanings, patterns, and procedures, and create environments that later impose upon them (Brown, 1978; Frost and Hayes, Note 1; Weick, 1979). "The study of reality creation is a study of power, in that definitions of reality, normalcy, rationality, and so on serve as paradigms that in some sense govern the conduct permissible within them" (Brown, 1978, p. 371). Controlling the development of the organizational paradigm allows individuals and subunits to define issues, set agendas, exclude competitors as irrelevant, and assert their own legitimacy. Just as some women used to accept women's traditional position in educational organizations as a "fact of life," an unquestionable social norm, so do all organizational participants mold their role expectations to some extent in accordance with the dominant paradigm.

Dimensions of Power

Within the ideal rational bureaucracy, power is seen as deriving from legitimate authority. It is formal, centralized, assigned, and durable. But in fact, each of these qualities of power can vary. The dimensions of intra-organizational power range across five continua:

1. Type of power--formal to informal.

   Formal power is exercised characteristically in a regular, recognizable, reliable, and explicit fashion. At the opposite end of this continuum is informal power: usually implicit, often invisible, and exercised irregularly.

2. Locus of power--centralized to diffused.

   In a structural sense, the organization can attempt to hold power centrally within a few positions, or can diffuse it. Centralized power is exclusive; diffused power is inclusive. Despite formal organizational efforts to control its locus, power is always both centralized and diffused--and frequently not in the balance preferred by organizational leaders.

3. Scope of impact--general (organization-wide) to particular (limited to individuals or subunits).

   Power is exercised across broad or narrow scopes of impact. Some power affects an entire organization (e.g., the power of the chief executive); other forms touch only particular subgroups or individuals.

4. Temporal context--standing to transitory.

   Some forms of power are standing--they exist apart from specific issues or conflicts. Other forms are transitory, created to address isolated problems, resolve particular conflicts, or enable certain decisions to be made.

5. Access to power--assigned to acquired.

   Power is given to individuals through the formal assignment of positions, responsibilities, and tasks; and it is acquired by individuals without official sanction.

Uses of Power

The most conservative view of power (as formal, centralized, designated, and enduring) presumes limited uses, primarily for purposes of control. Alternative views of power as informal, diffuse, acquired, and transitory argue that control is a necessary but insufficient defining factor. Power is employed to resolve conflicts; to negotiate the tacit agreements on which the organization functions; and, indeed, to modify the organizational paradigm.

Control

Power can be used to control the behavior of others. In the absence of consensus, at least minimal control is necessary if even the simplest organizational activities are to be accomplished. Those in designated power positions are expected to be in control. Subunit and other leaders may even be evaluated on the basis of their control behavior. Those in designated positions have access to organizational means of control not available to others (e.g., legitimate authority, role definition, organizational structure, rewards, and sanctions). These mechanisms serve to:

1. Constrain and direct the distribution of information within the organization (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977).
2. Constrain the activities of participants to specified function areas (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977).
3. Motivate particular kinds of behaviors.
4. Provide powerholders with control of valuable organizational resources.

But formal control is never absolute; it is limited by the willingness of subordinates to obey and the dispensability and replaceability of the incentives offered by powerholders. "Even in slave societies the power of master over slaves is not absolute" (Genovese, 1980, p. 9).

Conflict Resolution

The diverse preferences and beliefs held by organizational participants lead inevitably to conflicts--conflicts not amenable to rational, bureaucratic resolution. Power struggles allow competitors to confront and test each other; the result can be a new stability, agreed upon by both sides. According to Coser (1964):

> Eventually the parties must agree upon rules and norms allowing them to assess their respective power position in the struggle. Their common interest leads them to accept rules which enhance their mutual dependence in the very pursuit of their antagonistic goals. (p. 405)

Negotiation

The observation that formal control mechanisms are not absolute (being ultimately dependent upon the willingness of subordinates to comply) directs our attention to the dialectical nature of organizational life. Rules, procedures, and activities are situationally interpreted and tacit agreements are reached through a process of negotiation.

Power is a means individuals and subgroups use to improve their bargaining positions. Hughes's (1971) observation about society in general also applies to organizations: "Society is interaction. Interaction involves sensitivity to others, but some others more than other others" (p. vii).

Reality Creation

It is but a short step from seeing power as a basic means by which participants define and enlarge their organizational lifespaces to understanding the total organization as a reflection of power relationships and exchanges. The question "Who benefits?" is a meaningful one in understanding organizations.

> In hierarchical organizations (or in a bureaucratized society) it is not only the means of economic production that become concentrated but also the means of theoretical reflection. As large organizations emerge, elites exercise their powers more broadly, controlling complex interconnections over an ever-widening field....There comes to be not only a concentration of control over the contents of reality (the means of production), but also over the definition of reality (i.e., foundational assumptions concerning what constitutes "property," "rights," "obligations," "legitimacy," and so on)....We could say that "making decisions" is not the most important exercise of organizational power. Instead, this power is most strategically deployed in the design and implementation of paradigmatic frameworks within which the very meaning of such actions as "making decisions" is deployed. (Brown, 1978, p. 376)

Whether we view this set of frameworks as the operant organizational paradigm, the organizational reality, or the collective negotiated cause maps of organizational participants, they are the outcome of power relationships within the dominant coalitions of the organizational stakeholders.

Applications in Educational Organizations

1. Teacher Evaluation

The principal of Riverside Elementary School is completing the annual teacher evaluations. He has visited each classroom several times over the course of the year, one scheduled visit and one unscheduled observation, as per the formal procedure. He must now complete a detailed checklist of teacher competencies in several areas, ranging from classroom management to instructional competency to community involvement. He will then call each teacher into his office to review his observations, assessments, and recommendations. The teacher will be allowed to record differences of opinion for his/her personnel file.

This regularized (somewhat routine and bureaucratized) procedure involves an intricate network of power relationships and exchanges. The principal is nominally in charge and, through the process of teacher evaluation, exercises formal control over performance and behavior. But that control is limited by the information he is able to collect. Teachers counterbalance the principal's control through selective manipulation of the information on their performance that he receives. For instance, altering normal classroom routine when the principal is in the room can substantially influence his impressions. Even assuming complete information, control over performance implies that some sanctions and rewards are under the control of the principal. But the most obvious reward, salary, is determined by a salary schedule; the most obvious sanction, dismissal, is 90% inoperative at this school because that percentage of teachers is on tenure. The rewards and sanctions that can be manipulated by the designated leader are more subtle (committee assignments, recognition, extra duties, supplies and equipment, etc.).

The evaluation procedure itself is the product of formal and informal negotiations between administration and staff representatives, necessitated by the conflict between demands for accountability on the one hand and the autonomy of professional expertise on the other. These negotiations served to: (1) rationalize and legitimize both the conflict and its immediate resolution, the formal evaluation procedure; and (2) provide an acceptable arena in which the opponents could assess each other's relative strengths and weaknesses and agree, at least temporarily, on a set of day-to-day norms and rules. That seemingly stable feature of school organization--the teacher evaluation--is an impermanent result of intra-organizational power relationships.

2. Educational Research

> A well-known educational R&D organization was conducting a large project investigating the outcomes of education. The project was originally conceived by its director as a "naturalistic inquiry" emphasizing qualitative data gathering techniques. However, because the center director's office felt that this was an important and prestigious effort, sure to draw national attention, it was redesigned as a large-sample, quantitative, comparative study.

On the surface, this was a simple administrative adjustment overruling a decision made at a lower organizational level. But that is not quite all that was involved. Firstly, such adjustments in decisions are almost never made in regard to individual projects; this was an exceptional action. Secondly, this particular reversal highlighted the classical confrontation between management and the professional in organizations.

Why was the issue even raised by the center director? The official paradigm of the organization was dominated by quantitative inquiry; the center director felt that this particular study, because of the national visibility it would receive, had to represent the common practices of the organization. In a less important situation, the original research design would undoubtedly have been tolerated. But in such an important study, the official institutional paradigm held fast. Major support was given to the new emphasis on quantitative methodology, thus allowing the official paradigm to remain intact. But the expertise of the researcher-specialist was recognized through the inclusion of a qualitative substudy.

Summary

1. There are multiple sources of power within organizations: designated positions, control of incentives, access to information, possession of expertise, control of resources, the tradition of control, and the organizational paradigm itself.
2. Power is available to all organizational participants and is used by most.
3. The dimensions of power range across these continua:
    a. Formal/informal
    b. Centralized/diffused
    c. Broad/narrow in scope
    d. Standing/transitory
    e. Assigned/acquired
4. Power is used to:
    a. Exercise control
    b. Resolve conflicts
    c. Negotiate organizational order
    d. Create the organizational paradigm.
5. Power is a natural and basic function in and throughout organizations. It is the glue that holds organizations together.
6. Power perspectives enrich the repertoire of lenses through which we can view organizations and organizational life. They allow the observer to see:
    a. The interaction between individual, subunit, and organizational needs, interests, and activities.
    b. The dynamic equilibrium between forces for innovation and change and forces for maintenance of the status quo.

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SENSE MAKING IN ORGANIZATIONS

Mary R. Carroll

Many contemporary theorists argue that the ultimate structure of an organization is a consequence of the efforts of organizational participants to make sense of the experiences they encounter while living and working in the organization. This "sense making" is carried on by each individual, by groups of individuals, and by groups of groups.

The process of making sense of organizational experience reflects an individual's previous extra-organizational experiences and continuing intra-organizational experiences. As the individual makes sense of the organization by developing a personally satisfactory interpretation of it, a personal cause map (a conceptual diagram of the causal relationships within the organization) is evolved. Each member engages in this process. Ultimately, as individuals work together, they must arrive at some mutually acceptable consensus about the meaning of the organization: they must arrive at a group cause map. The sense-making processes engaged in by individuals, by groups of individuals, and by groups of groups are continuous and constantly changing as their experience of the organization changes.

Developing a group sense of the organization requires negotiation. It demands a meeting of the minds and a willingness to reconsider one's own cause maps in the light of others', and in the context of new situations. This process may result in slight alterations or major shifts in understandings of the organization, yielding new cause maps all around. These collaborative understandings constitute the negotiated order, the currently agreed-upon sense of the organization, which is constantly emerging. These emerging understandings, in turn, act on participants, affecting their experience of the organization and hence their future sense making. We will briefly consider these processes, their outcomes, and their implications for the study of organizing, beginning with the presentation of a theory of negotiated order. This theory challenges the traditional view of organization, which assumes that organizational order can be prefabricated, superimposed, and insulated both from the people who make up the organization and from its constantly fluctuating environment. We will also explore individual and group sense making, individual and group cause maps, and changes in cause maps.

A Theory of Negotiated Order

> Order is something at which members of any society, any organization, must work. For the shared agreements, the binding

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> contracts--which constitute the grounds for an expectable, nonsurprising, taken-for-granted, even ruled orderliness--are not binding and shared for all time....In short, the bases of concerted action (social order) must be reconstituted continually ..."worked out." (Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlich, and Sabshin, 1963, p. 148)

Negotiated order theory evolved chiefly out of case studies of health occupations, professions, and organizations. It is based on Symbolic Interactionism, a sociological perspective that has as a central proposition the idea that "through communication processes, people transform themselves and their environments and then respond to those transformations" (Stone and Farberman, 1970, p.v). Negotiated order theory calls into question a number of the assumptions of structural/functional and rational/bureaucratic explanations of complex organizations:

Bureaucratic Assumptions	Negotiated Order Assumptions
1a. Explicit rules	1b. Tacit agreements
2a. Standard operating procedures	2b. Situationally determined procedures
3a. Positional power	3b. Situational power
4a. Stability	4b. Continuous change

These two sets of assumptions look like polar opposites. The bureaucratic assumptions focus on defined structure, maximal predictability, and minimal change; the unspoken but pervasive underlying conviction is that the logic of the organization's developers, once imposed, will serve well, continuously, and unchanged until a calculated management decision to make adjustments. Negotiated order theorists, on the other hand, assume that broadly defined understandings rather than precise rules generally determine organizational actions and reactions; these general understandings are constantly shaped and molded by organizational participants and environments to fit each situation as it is encountered. The result is an ongoing, frequently informal, and sometimes unconscious adaptation to the emerging present.

Bureaucratic theories assume that organizations must be consciously channeled in order to guarantee success, while negotiated order theory posits that an organization will naturally reach its potential. In the following sections, each of the four assumptions of negotiated order theory will be examined.

Tacit Agreements

Rational, bureaucratic perspectives assume a body of rules developed by the organization and faithfully invoked by organizational participants to cope with choices or problems regularly confronting them. Negotiated order theorists assume that most organizational members neither know nor understand all rules, their utility, or their application; the difficulty of rule application is especially apparent in schools and colleges, since rules governing professionals are typically non-specific.

In addition, situations frequently arise in which the application of known rules is uncertain or inappropriate. The day-to-day lives of many organizations are actually conducted on the basis of unstated and sometimes unrecognized "house rules." Strauss et al. (1963) have made the following observation about professionals in health organizations, equally applicable to professionals in education:

> Except for a few legal rules, which stem from state and professional prescription, and for some rulings pertaining to all of [a school or university], almost all of these house rules are much less like commands, and much more like general understandings: not even their punishments are spelled out: and mostly they can be stretched, negotiated, argued, as well as ignored or applied at convenient moments. (p. 153)

Situationally Determined Procedures

Day and Day (1977) point out that negotiated order theory stresses temporality. It assumes that context affects any tacit agreement that is negotiated. Educational organizations frequently encounter situations for which their existing general policies or rules provide little direct guidance; where procedures must be negotiated in response to contextual demands. For example, a student who is regularly truant creates an issue that cannot be resolved in a manner satisfactory to all parties involved by the simple application of school system rules governing attendance. In fact, one of the weaknesses of rules is the implicit assumption that, once invoked, they will solve the problem. The "regular" truant has already broken a series of explicit rules. This provokes a minor crisis in which the disparate interests of the student, teachers, administrators, and parents are not likely to be served by the application of a single rule. However, negotiation could focus on the differing interests of concerned participants in an attempt to generate an optimal solution.

This does not mean that each decision situation is a novelty. Negotiated order theorists argue that the disagreements and issues that arise in dealing with organizational problems are neither unique nor random. Rather, they follow logically from the backgrounds of the participants in terms of such characteristics as education, race, sex, ideology, experience, and socio-economic background. A practiced and perceptive organizational member can predict with reasonable accuracy the manner in which a problem will be addressed, by whom, and to what effect.

In addition to the negotiations that occur among organizational participants concerning the application of existing policies and rules, negotiations must also be undertaken to make initial sense of the meaning and impact of newly adopted policies and rules or emerging extra-organizational circumstances. Maines (1977) has made the following observation:

> Organizational structure continually changes--it appears and disappears, as it were--to accommodate different phases of a process. It is therefore impossible to define what organizational structure "is" without taking into consideration the temporal dimension and the kinds of objects and activities for which a given structure is a "structure." (p. 249)

Faced with the variety of daily organizational life, participants must continuously adapt the procedures they invoke to successfully complete one task before they move on to grapple with another.

Situational Power

Day and Day (1977) cite the following description of power as one commonly used by negotiated order theorists:

> Power and power relationships are depicted as varying according to the highly specific set of events and/or actions at hand. Power is thus portrayed as being situational and contingent in nature and, as a result, it has to be explained as a part of the broader social context in which it is embedded. (p. 133)

This perspective implies the existence of important, continuous relationships in which informal organizational events shape more formal rules and power relationships. Events occurring both within and outside an organization result in changes in the balance and locus of power in subsequent situations. Power, therefore, is not tied directly to positions or even to individuals in positions. It is a function of the immediate situation, the broader context, the participants, and their contemporary relationships.

Dimensions of context that are relevant to the nature of power negotiations have been listed by Strauss (Note 1):

> The number of negotiators, their relative experience in negotiating, and whom they represent.
>
> Whether the negotiations are one-shot, repeated, sequential, serial, multiple, linked.
>
> The relative balance of power exhibited by the respective negotiating parties in the negotiation itself.
>
> The nature of their respective stances in the negotiation.
>
> The options to avoiding or discontinuing negotiation.
>
> The visibility of the transactions to others--i.e., their covert or overt characters.
>
> The clarity of legitimacy boundaries of the issues negotiated.

The essential difference between this view of power and the more traditional perspective lies in what is posited as the norm. Bureaucratic theorists hold positional power as the standard from which deviations (often situational) are to be expected. Negotiated order theorists consider situational negotiations, affected by variables such as formally designated position and individual negotiation characteristics, to be the rule rather than the exception.

Continuous Change

> Any changes that impinge upon [an organization's negotiated] order--whether something ordinary like a new staff member, a disrupting event, a betrayed contract; or whether unusual, like the introduction of a new technology or a new theory--will call for renegotiation or reappraisal, with consequent changes in the organizational order...a new order, not the re-establishment of an old, a reinstituting of a previous equilibrium. (Strauss et al., 1963, p. 165)

The view of change held by negotiated order theorists is captured in the preceding quotation. Organizations are seen as continuously engaging in the negotiation of agreements, the modification of organizational structures, and the establishment and reestablishment of power relationships. (It should be noted that Day and Day [1977] charge that negotiated order theory remains vague about change. They suggest that "the organization...is viewed as a locale where certain agreements are being terminated or forgotten while others are being reviewed, renewed, revised, revoked, or whatever" [p. 133].)

Change for the negotiated order theorist is an inherent part of organizing, of negotiating the new order. It is incremental, subtle, spontaneous, and usually unplanned--a daily, unnoticed occurrence. It is usually a minor rather than a notable event. Not so from the traditional bureaucratic perspective, which greets reorganization or the implementation of an innovation as uncommon and noteworthy organizational endeavors, to to be accompanied by the appointment of committees and task forces, the extensive involvement of organizational participants, and data gathering on predicted alternative outcomes. The administrator who supports such an effort anticipates that the change will be highly visible, carefully planned, and controversial to organizational actors.

If the negotiated order theorist's picture of the organization as an entity continually in the process of organizing accurately reflects life in schools and colleges, then it raises some tantalizing questions. How are tacit agreements negotiated? How does negotiation work? Sense making through negotiation ultimately structures the organization, but how do preordinate organizational rules and regulations affect this process, or do they? How does power come into play in sense making? What catalysts stimulate continuous organizational change? How does the ongoing continuous process of change affect, or how is it affected by, formally initiated change efforts? How, in fact, does an organization structure itself?

Structuring the Organization

Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood (1980) have concluded that "the production and re-creation of structural forms through time should be conceived as the outcome of a complex interaction of interpersonal cognitive processes, power dependencies, and contextual constraints" (p. 1). The authors present a theoretical model of this structuring process (sense making) as it defines and mediates organizational constructs:

> Organizational members create provinces of meaning which incorporate interpretive schemes, intermittently articulated as values and interests, that form the basis of their orientation and strategic purposes within organizations.
>
> Since interpretive schemes can be the basis of cleavage as much as of consensus, it is often appropriate to consider an organization as composed of alternative interpretive schemes, value preferences, and sectional interests, the resolution of which is determined by dependencies of power and domination.
>
> Such constitutive structuring by organizational members has, in turn, always to accommodate contextual constraints inherent in characteristics of the organization and the environment, with organizational members differentially responding to and enacting their contextual conditions according to the opportunities provided by infrastructure and time. (p.4)

We have thus far chiefly addressed the process of continuous negotiation of order in organizations. In the following segments, our focus shifts to the individual entering an unfamiliar organizational environment; to the manner in which sense is made; and to the development of cause maps which become the basis for negotiations.

Constructing Provinces of Meaning

Gouldner's (1971) "domain assumptions," Cicourel's (1973) "cognitive organization," Goffman's (1974) "frames"--all of these terms refer to interpretive schemes, deep-seated bases of orientation that are typically taken for granted by the individual.

Scripting. Langer (1978) discusses interpretive schemes as they affect the individual seeking to make sense of a new situation; in her discussion, interpretive schemes are called "scripts." Abelson (1976) defines a script as "a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer" (p. 33). Scripts allow an individual to engage in appropriate behaviors without consciously attending to all elements of the situation or to the range of behavior options available. This can occur because "large units of varied behavior can be chunked together to form fewer coherent cognitive units" (Langer, p. 41). The individual is thereby relieved of the burden of close attention to every detail or aspect of a new situation. It can be assumed, based on initial cues, that much of a new experience will in fact have been experienced before. Consider the person who moves from one professorship to another at a different university. It would be natural for him/her to presume similarity in many details of the two positions and to act and react more or less by rote. As Langer notes,

> The more often we have engaged in the activity the more likely it is that we will rely on scripts for the completion of the activity and the less likely it is that there will be any correspondence between our actions and those thoughts of ours that occur simultaneously. (p. 39)

But certain conditions will stimulate individuals to engage actively in conscious thought about a situation, to become involved in sense making--the creation of new scripts. Langer summarizes these:

> When encountering a novel situation for which, by definition, they have no script.
>
> When enacting scripted behavior becomes effortful, i.e., when significantly more of the same kind of scripted behavior is demanded by the situation than was demanded by the original script.
>
> When enacting scripted behavior is interrupted by external factors that do not allow for its completion.
>
> When experiencing a negative or positive consequence that is sufficiently discrepant with the consequences of prior enactments of the same behavior.
>
> When the situation does not allow for sufficient involvement. (pp. 55-56)

Testing. Having entered a new situation, the individual must test it for reality (i.e., test it against existing scripts). Brickman (1978) has observed: "The point is that all roles, in a game, in an experiment, or in the outside world, are unreal at first and become progressively, ineluctably more real through our own behavior and other people's responses" (p. 9). Scripts provide basic reality information. The extent to which a script for a given role has been developed by an individual determines the remaining reality testing to be done:

> When the existing situation approximates the model, the actor behaves habitually, continuing ongoing conduct without thoughts or consciousness and employing patterns of conduct that have proved successful in similar situations. When his disappointment goads the imagination, conduct that is prospectively successful is tested in the world and, insofar as it remains successful in restrospect, adopted as new habit. (Mead, 1934, in Handel, 1979, p. 874).

Attribution of reality requires both internal correspondence with an individual's feelings, i.e., fit; and external correspondence with consequences, i.e., risk. In internal correspondence, "a person's behavior expresses feelings that are both substantial and appropriate to the behavior....When we say a situation is real, we mean there is a good deal of emotion in the situation" (Brickman, 1978, p. 11). In other words, the individual's behavior is a reflection of feelings about what the situation means and an interpretation of how he/she should appear and act in the situation so that other participants will develop an appropriate understanding of the individual. External correspondence means that "a person's behavior elicits responses that are both substantial and appropriate to the behavior....When we say a situation is real, we mean in part that there is a good deal at stake in the situation" (Brickman, p. 11).

The actions of each individual publicly identify his/her view of the reality of the situation. Other actors can accept or reject, in whole or in part, both the behavior and the implied reality of any participant. The risk of this rejection is faced by every individual in every situation to some degree. The script developed by each individual is at stake in every situation. These factors result in a heightened sensitivity and awareness on the part of the individual new to an environment; the necessity of arriving at an appropriate understanding of conditions requires this level of attentiveness.

The determination of reality, in part, involves other individuals. Turner (1978) suggests three principles that apply when one person observes another. The emerging sense of the other person is greatly affected by the role that person is perceived to be playing. The three principles are:

> Appearance principle - in the absence of contradictory cues, people tend to accept others as they appear.
>
> Effect principle - the disposition to conceive people on the basis of their role behavior will vary directly with the potential effect of the role on alter [on oneself].
>
> Consistency principle - people should view a particular role enactment as accurately revealing the person when doing so adds to a consistant picture of the person and should distinguish between role and person when failure to do so imports inconsistencies to the image. (p. 6)

These principles indicate that one person observing another will tend to accept the role behavior in which that person is engaged except when that behavior is inconsistent with a previously developed image. The degree to which the role behavior of another is understood to directly affect the observer will skew the observer's ability to develop an understanding of that person strictly on the basis of role behavior (appearance principle). In this latter circumstance, there is more at stake for the observer and she/he is searching for cues beyond external performance to add to a complete understanding of the person observed.

The process of reality testing, then, is one in which an organizational member tests his/her developed scripts against the apparent reality of the organization as a part of the process of making sense of it. This testing includes the assessment of other organizational members. At the same time, other organizational members are assessing the new participant and developing a sense of his/her role in the organization. These simultaneous processes act on one another as all parties work at making sense of the organization.

Committing. Ultimately, having assessed existing personal scripts and having conducted reality testing in the new environment, the individual becomes committed to a certain set of beliefs about the situation/organization:

> The power of commitment in shaping attitudes stems from the fact that individuals adjust their attitudes to fit the situations to which they are committed....You act. You believe your action was valuable, worthwhile, desirable. You act again, renewing the belief. In time, without realizing it, you have made a myth; your sense of veracity and value has been merged into the pattern of action. The myth sustains the action, and the action sustains the myth. (Salancik, 1977, p. 70)

Salancik discusses three factors that bind an individual to his or her acts: visibility, irrevocability, and volitionality. Visibility is self-explanatory: behavior is known to others by direct observation of that behavior. They saw you do or say something. Visibility is closely tied to the irrevocability of a behavior. If you are seen engaging in an act, you will be hard-pressed to deny having performed that act. You can attempt to deny a particular interpretation, but not the act itself. Irrevocable behavior cannot be changed or undone. Volition is described as essential to all commitment. "Without volition, a behavior is not necessarily commmitting, for the person can always assert that he really did not cause the behavior himself" (p. 69). Lack of volition in carrying out certain acts is more likely to be met with in the behavior of the new organizational member who is still developing a sense of the organization than in that of longer-term organizational participants.

These three conditions bind the individual to his/her behavior because they associate that behavior with the individual's identity by personal participation and by the attribution of others. In the process, some aspect of one's developing sense of the organization firms up and one's place in the organization becomes a little more clearly defined by others. The individual becomes committed to a particular sense of the organization and the organization becomes committed to a particular sense of the individual.

Creating Cause Maps

The processes described up to this point (scripting, testing, and committing) are necessary elements in the individual's progress toward developing a cause map of the situation or organization. One product of individual sense making is a cause map, a probably unique understanding of what causes what in the organization. Just as each individual develops a personal cause map, so too do cause maps aggregate among individuals in the process of group sense making.

Frost and Hayes (Note 2) point out that individual and group cause maps may or may not be in agreement. In the case of an orchestra, for example, all members share the same activities and feedback, resulting in conditions favorable to the development of a unitary cause map among members (Bougon, Weick, and Binkhorst, 1977). Police officers, however, while sharing the same role, have widely varying experiences and feedback, creating conditions that allow for the development of different, even conflicting cause maps (Manning, 1977). Sometimes, individual and group maps are identical or very similar in terms of the variables included, the importance attached to those variables, and the connections perceived to exist between them. Frost and Hayes suggest that this situation occurs

> when the flow of organizational experiences is perceived to be relatively unambiguous (March and Olsen, 1976), unequivocal (Weick, 1969), or certain (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967), or where beliefs about cause-effect linkages and preferences regarding possible outcomes are certain (Thompson, 1967). (Note 2)

Individual and group maps may also differ by choice of, importance of, and connections between variables. Differences will be increasingly great

> when the flow of experiences is perceived to be highly ambiguous (March and Olsen, 1976), equivocal (Weick, 1969), uncertain (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967), or when beliefs about cause-effect relationships and preferences among desired outcomes vary in their certainty (Thompson, 1967). (Note 2)

These latter conditions are typical of many educational organizations. Such organized anarchies are characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technologies, and fluid participation.

Negotiating Cause Maps

> Even if actors are individually free to define objects as they please, the freedom of each actor is a condition of the action of others. (Handel, 1979, p. 875)

Tacit agreements require shared cause maps that must be negotiated. The model proposed by Ranson et al. (1980) suggests that conflict between cause maps is resolved through the use of power and domination.

> Structuring is typically the privilege of some organizational actors. The meanings that shape organizational structuring are as often the source of cleavage as of consensus, bringing members into conflict. An organization is thus better conceived

> as being composed of a number of groups divided by alternative conceptions, value preferences, and sectional interests....An organization "is a man-made instrument and it will be made by men in proportion to their power in a given situation" (Gouldner, 1954, p. 27). (p. 7)

The basis of the power used in the negotiation process is the ability to control outcomes. This ability is grounded in "differential access to material and structural resources" (Ranson et al., p. 7). The bases of power have been conceived in slightly different ways by other authors, e.g.:

Strategic contingencies that are unequally controlled by organizational subunits, units central to the organization's work flow, that monopolize scarce skills and cope with key sources of organizational uncertainty (Hinings et al., 1974; Martin, 1977).

Control of scarce resources (Aldrich, 1976; Benson, 1975; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974; Pfeffer and Moore, 1980).

Skill that individuals apply in using scarce resources and in mobilizing support for their claims (Burns, 1961, 1966; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Pettigrew, 1973).

Changing Cause Maps

Sense making in organizations is a continuous process. Order is momentarily achieved and constantly sought; the establishment of order as the basis for action in organizations is unending. Ranson et al. (1980) have posited five conditions that contribute to this continuous process of change:

> There will be a change in structuring if organizational members revise the provinces of meaning, the interpretive schemes, which underpin their constitutive structuring of organizations.
>
> Structural change can result from inconsistencies and contradictions between the purposive values and interests that lie behind the strategic implementing and warranting of structural features.
>
> Significant changes in resource availability and in other key sources of organizational uncertainty can undermine the bases of dominant coalitions and permit the creation of new power dependencies--the possibility of organizational "revolution."
>
> A major change in situational exigencies such as size, technology, and environment will constrain organizational members to adapt their structural arrangements.
>
> Contradictory imperatives of situational constraints will entail change in structural arrangements. (pp. 12-13)

These conditions are typically present in educational organizations.

Summary and Conclusions

Educators should consider what they might discover in their schools, colleges, or agencies were they to employ the lenses of negotiated order theory. The picture of an organization forming and reforming itself; discovering patterned procedures and rules as it acts out its decisions; altering its power bases to fit the contingencies of the problem area; and changing unobtrusively but constantly--this has the "feel" of an educational environment.

Can it be that we have made our schools and colleges what they are by creating our own organizational realities? It looks like the answer is yes, at least to a far greater extent than we have admitted in the past.

Our suggestion for educators is: Relax. Spend less time trying to make events fit existing rules, policies, practices; allow negotiation to occur in the belief that more useful and meaningful practices will result. Recognize that views of educational organizations will never be unitary, can never be made unitary, and probably should never become unitary. Accept the pervasiveness of change and integrate this acceptance into daily interactions with your organizations.

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IV

POSTSCRIPT: FROM ORTHODOXY TO PLURALISM

David L. Clark

> The logic of the researchers' analysis can have no force in the everyday world unless it conforms to the logic that people use in everyday situations. Unless there is a close match between the world as researchers construct it and the world as people perceive it and act in it, the researchers' efforts to establish social truths will be a self-contained and ultimately a self-deluding pastime. (Greenfield, 1978, p. 13)

What is being observed, lived through, and created in human organizations is too complex to be captured by any single thecretical framework. The current perturbations agitating the study or organizations are resulting in a healthy skepticism. The bureaucratic perspective is not under attack, but components of it are being challenged. The perspective has long dominated empirical inquiry, administrative training, and the formulation of management systems; its axiomatic elements (e.g., the goal paradigm, rational-sequential decision making, and goal-based evaluation models) have all but overrun thought about organizations; and it is doubtful that this or any one view merits such sovereignty.

A "New Generation" Scrapbook

Here are some citations from major contemporary theorists and researchers who have challenged orthodox thinking about organizations.

The Demise of the Goal Paradigm

No single element is more necessary to the dominance of bureaucratic theory than the definition of organizations as goal-attaining entities.

> The study of organizations is regarded as possessing an essential unity; as having been dominated since its inception by the conceptualization of organizations as goal attainment devices. ...Yet almost invariably, studies demonstrate the fruitlessness of understanding organizations as goal attaining devices. The paradigm retains its primacy not because of the insights it yields, but because it is embedded so deeply in our consciousness that it is a reality rather than a theoretical construct to be

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> discarded when it ceases to enlighten. Intellectually exhausted, the goal paradigm has become a procrustean bed into which all findings are forced and even incipient counter-paradigms absorbed, regardless of their promise of greater insight. (Georgiou, 1973, pp. 291-292)

> The common assertion that goal consensus must occur prior to action obscures the fact that consensus is impossible unless there is something tangible around which it can occur. And this "something tangible" may well turn out to be actions already completed. Thus it is entirely possible that goal statements are retrospective rather than prospective. (Weick, 1979, p. 18)

> The first analytical problem found in the newer research concerns the grounding of organizational phenomena--structures, goals, technologies, etc.--in the activities and practices of the people. The research focuses attention upon the production and reproduction of organizational reality in the ongoing interactions of people....Theoretically, the action critique forces us to attend to the processes through which particular organizational patterns have been generated and are sustained. [Manning (1977) suggests] the image of consensus regarding goals, means, strategies, and so on is an illusion. In actuality, a daily process of negotiation takes place to decide how these loosely understood guidelines are to be applied in specific cases. (Benson, 1977, pp. 8-9)

The Rise of Neo-Rationalism

The goal paradigm is not the only concept supporting the dominance of classical organizational theory. The norms of rationality and order are also necessary to the classical tradition.

> In the last two decades there has been a considerable examination of the cognitive and evaluative limitations on rationality....There is an inclination to accept the proposition that while organizations are intendedly rational, they frequently act on incomplete or incorrect information and without being aware of all of their alternatives. Similarly, there is no longer general acceptance of a simple view of a well-defined organizational preference function. Instead, there is an effort to accommodate in the theory the frequent observations of inconsistent and conflicting organizational objectives. (March and Olsen, 1976, p. 54)

> Rationality is best understood as in the eye of the beholder. ...To say that "systems" or organizations engage in rational decision-making makes sense only if we can specify some set of persons who agree on some desired outcome, on a specified set of means to attain this outcome, on ways in which the specific means will be activated, and on how it will be known

> whether the desired outcome was attained or not. Since this fourfold agreement is more difficult when large numbers of people are involved, it is likely that rationality will characterize mostly small groups of actors and that, at any moment in time, organizations will have several different and contradictory rationalities. (Weick, 1979, p. 21)

> Just as Marxian macro-social analysis has shown bureaucratic rationality to be substantively irrational, likewise, when subjected to micro-analysis by ethnomethodologists, the supposedly rational procedures of formal organizations turn out to be absurd and yet, in their very absurdity, to provide the rhetoric and rationale for their own legitimacy. By looking beyond the question-begging assumptions of functionalists ...ethnomethodologists have shown that the activities themselves...are composed of what ordinary folk would call non-rational elements. Indeed, it is precisely of such non-rational elements that the business of organizations consists. (Brown, 1978, p. 368)

> Thus rationality, rather than being the guiding rule of organizational life, turns out to be an achievement--a symbolic product that is constructed through actions that in themselves are nonrational. (Brown, 1978, p. 370)

The Diffusion of Pluralism

As alternative perspectives illuminate our view of organizations and organizational behavior, they strip away our defenses of certainty and precision--the over-simplifications and pseudo-technologies that allowed us to "know" our organizations:

> Phillip Johnson was recently quoted as saying "Let us celebrate the death of the *idée fixe*. There are no rules, only facts. There is no order, only preferences."...This observation by one of the world's great architects, uttered in the context of his own field, is applicable to most of modern living. For us as administrators and professors of educational administration it is particularly applicable because our theories have been based on the *idée fixe*. (Griffiths, 1977, p. 2)

> Interesting people and interesting organizations construct complicated theories of themselves. In order to do this, they need to supplement the technology of reason with a technology of foolishness. Individuals and organizations need ways of doing things for which they have no good reason. Not always. Not usually. But sometimes. They need to act before they think. (March, 1972, p. 123)

> The problems of ambiguity in organizations are conspicuous. Nevertheless, the literature on organizational learning is rarely uncoupled from the idea that learning is adaptive. Experience is viewed as producing wisdom and improved behavior....We relax the presumption of improvement but not the presumption of a process of learning. We assume that individuals modify their understandings in a way that is intendedly adaptive. They are, however, operating under conditions in which (a) what happened is not immediately obvious, (b) why it happened is obscure, and (c) whether what happened is good, is unclear. (March and Olsen, 1976, p. 59)

> The established stance toward organizational studies, based on a problematic of rational selection, is challenged by a number of alternatives....While the shape of future work cannot be forecast precisely...an adequate approach to organizational analysis must deal with (1) social production of organizational reality, including the reality-constructing activity of the organizational scientist; (2) the political bases of organizational realities, including the ties of theorists to power structures; (3) the connection of organizations to the larger set of structural arrangements in the society; and (4) the continuously emergent character of organizational patterns. (Benson, 1977, p. 16)

Conclusion

The new organizational perspectives we have covered will eventually permeate the field of educational thought because they are useful. But their spread will be slow because the language, politics, and psychology of rationalism will make it difficult for practitioners to espouse the new perspectives or abandon "safe" rational structures. The author concluded a recent document (Clark, 1979) with three observations about the factors that will likely facilitate or inhibit the employment of the newer perspectives in the field of education:

I'm O.K.--You're O.K.

The newer organizational perspectives may have been explicated by organizational theorists but they are grounded in the experience of practitioners. The theoretical assertions of ambiguity, trial and error, and just plain muddling through in organizations legitimizes the everyday life of organizational participants. Organized anarchies do perform redundant and overlapping activities to attain their ends. Their goals are often unclear; usually not shared, or even understood, by most employees. And yet, these are the organizations that successfully carry out the vital work of our society. The oddly human characteristics manifested by these organizations frequently support optimum levels of effectiveness if not efficiency. If the newer perspectives serve no other purpose, they may help people to accept the fact that there will be ambiguity and anarchy in organizational systems; that they are not necessarily failing or in need of reorganization or restaffing simply because their institutions manifest nonsystematic responses.

Call Me an Experimenter

The words people use to describe a new activity can predispose others to judge that activity negatively. Who could support leaders who are "uncertain"; organizations that are "rudderless"; units that are "muddling through;" or a school system or college with "unclear goals?" These characteristics are considered by many to be indicative of failing organizations. An absurd set of unattainable goals is generally preferred to a tentative stance toward goal setting. A leader who knows where he/she is going is more admired than an uncertain leader--even when followers sense that the "certain" leader is in error about objectives or has over-simplified the route.

If it is true that the real world of organizational life is less certain than traditional reconstructed logics have portrayed it, we need to assume that tentative probes by administrators are systematic explorations of the future, and we must dignify these efforts with positive or at least neutral appelations. "Mixing, matching, and switching tactics during program adaptation" carries less negative connotations then do "muddling through" or "drifting with the tide."

The Politics and Psychology of Rationalism

Classical views of organizing are supported by political and psychological structures that are so strong as to be nearly unassailable, e.g.:

- Who wishes to point out to legislators or boards of trustees the redundancy and waste that cannot be eliminated in an interorganizational arrangement; and then defend it as not only inevitable but probably desirable for attaining effective operations?

- Would you like to be the first to report that, based on current activities, you have discovered an appropriate set of post facto goals for your organization?

- Who will volunteer to point out that the new school improvement program to be supported by Congress is based on uncertain technology; is likely to result, at best, in some incremental change; is certain to be wasteful in execution; might better be designed to emphasize flexibility (a bit of playfulness) rather than orderliness; and is structured to make some failure safe rather than being fail-safe?

A rational view of organizations is psychologically beneficial and politically expedient. In that rational world, you can be accountable and responsive; orderly and efficient; systematic and forceful; in control of your own destiny. The tolerance for ambiguity is low. Grandiose schemes and promises are within your grasp. Long-range planning is feasible. Fail-safe protection is possible.

Of course, the evidence is overwhelming that such a world does not exist for most of us, most of the time. But is it foolish to assume that the new perspectives will be embraced enthusiastically in the real world simply because they are grounded in that world. Much of the language and action of practice is designed to soften, to obfuscate the harsh realities of everyday life in organizations. Those who feel that the new perspectives will lead eventually to stronger, more effective organizations will first have to cope with the powerful hold exercised over practitioners, policy makers, and decision makers by rational, systems-based organizational models.

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